

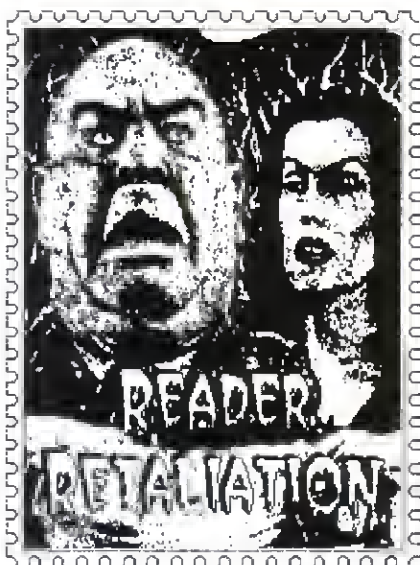
DIGITAL PREW

THE Bio-degradable Source for Videogamers



#39:

killerzazy.



tips & tricks

Hey, Joel

I've been meaning to write for a long time, but '98 has been extremely busy. For starters, I just wanted to yell at you for not stopping by the Tips & Tricks booth at the Electronic Entertainment Expo. Heck, if nothing else, you and your posse could have grabbed a bunch of free magazines!

I wanted to tell you about an interesting experience I had at that show. Some guy walked up to me while I was standing at the booth and asked me if I knew about the greatest video-game secret of all time. I waggered a few guesses, but he finally steered me around to the subject of Pitfall II. "Oh!" I said. "The second quest!" A big grin spread across his face; he seemed to be genuinely impressed that I knew about it. He went on to explain how he had been a producer at Activision working on the C64 and Atari 800 versions of the game, and that the people handling the conversions for those systems had made separate decisions about what they were going to do with the extra memory that the computers had to offer. The C64 guys wanted to improve the graphics, and the Atari guys wanted to add a second quest. So they went off in different directions - but when the marketing people heard about the second quest, they freaked out. They were afraid that the C64 customers would hear about the second quest and be angry that they didn't get it in their version! So they decided not to advertise the fact that the Atari version had this extra feature; they were forced to keep it a secret. It was a very interesting story, and I was pleased to have defended Tips & Tricks' reputation as "the #1 Video-Game Tips Magazine"...but what I didn't tell him was that I had no first-hand knowledge of that particular trick. I had read about it in Digital Press! So I owe ya.

It was also disappointing to learn that you were unable to attend the World of Atari

show in Vegas. I did get to meet some of the DP folks there, but I really did want to shake your hand and tell you how much I enjoy the 'zine. Anyway, the show really inspired me to do some heavy-duty 2600 playing when I got back home, and it was then that I decided to get serious about some of the questions that had been nagging at me for the past 16 years or so. Namely, does Laser Gates really have an ending, and what were those letters I kept seeing in Subterranea? I've always loved the Imagic games and spent hundreds of hours playing them; I figured a few hundred more couldn't hurt.

Well, Laser Gates is still a mystery to me. The instruction manual seems to suggest that it is a "beatable" game, but I've never been able to get to anything remotely resembling an ending...despite several "perfect" games in which I sustained zero damage, but always ran out of time or fuel. The good news, however, is that I finally pinned down a genuine Easter egg in Subterranea! I've never seen this one printed anywhere, so I hope it's news to you and your readers. To find it, play through the first two stages. At the start of the third stage, shoot all of the Aerobots that the "hideous HEXUPLEX" sends at you...but when the Treasure Crystal appears, don't touch it! Instead, shoot the Crystal exactly 33 times; it will change into the initials "MK" (in obvious reference to the game's designer, Mark Klein). If you shoot it more than 33 times, it will change back into a Treasure Crystal, but you can get the initials to reappear over and over every 256 shots after that. Woo-hoo! Oh well, I thought it was pretty cool.

Thanks again...and if you know anybody who can shed any light on the subject of Laser Gates, I'm all ears!

- Chris Bieniek, Tips & Tricks Magazine

And there I was thinking that the editors of pro magazines were too busy to get dirty with their games... you actually discovered a trick for Subterranea on your own... amazing! Chris, I'll be happy to add this easter egg to our DP Guide for future generations. Who knows, maybe some day some other editor from some other magazine can impress a gamer with your trick the way you did with Pitfall III! As for the Laser Gates answer, I can't say personally. I have the same problem. I always run out of fuel before reaching the end. Anyone ever "beaten" Laser Gates?

nostalgia, part one

Joe,

hi my name is Jonathan Cwynar and I just received my copy of digital press. I just wanted to take a second and thank you and your team for all of the hard work and high quality product. second I wanted to compliment you on your wonderful preface. your story sounds much like mine, except that I am a little younger than you. let me share for a second.

you see, I am 22 years old now, and I can still remember it like it was yesterday. My best friend Ryan Coleman had just got the first Atari 2600. his parents basically had a new son from that point on. I was over there constantly. we would hold these Olympic style tournaments to determine who was the best in the neighborhood. then it happen, Christmas morning, under the tree, was something strange, too big to be a 2600 box, what I was it I thought, the boom, I opened it, ATARI 5200 is staring me in the face. my first video game system. I must have been 7 or 8 years old. of course I experienced the normal 5200 controller problems, even back then, but that was heaven for me. years later, I sold my 5200 and all 45 complete games for \$100 to buy a Nintendo, a move a regret to this date. the progression continued to Sega then to Playstation and now to the n64, MAME, and probably whatever else comes out.

one day in the late summer of 1996 I was telling my a friend of mine, damn, I really wish I could find a 5200 and some games to play. so I went out to a local flea market, nothing, but I did find a complete in box 2600 with some games for \$5.00 so I bought it. that started in the second chapter of the classics in my life. I started looking for games at the local thrift store and flea market every week. I started my sophomore year at the university of Pittsburgh, where I met bob "don't fear" Taylor the year before. I was telling him about the my new found hobby. that night he dug out his old 2600 and started playing. the next thing I know, we were driving all over western Pennsylvania looking for games. after deciding that fighting over games was stupid, we consolidated our efforts and teamed up. so now, I am coming forward as the second half of the don't fear project. this can be confirmed on bob's web page.

why am I telling you this, you ask. well after reading your preface in the new digital press I was inspired and reminded why I love the hobby. it is not about selling games, it is about playing games. I think too often people get caught up in prices, but you humbly bring it all into perspective. thank you. bob and I are currently working on a documentary film about two guys (played by bob and myself) hunting all over the world for the classics and some kind of film that takes a look at behind the scenes of running some of the largest on-line auctions ever. all of this stuff is our way of giving to the gaming community. of course this films are works in process and still possibly a year before completion, but none the less in existence.

in conclusion, I just wanted to thank you for all of services and hard work. please forward these thank you's to the appropriate people. I have learned so much from the hobby, but most importantly I have made great friends.

- Jon

Thanks for the LORE, Jon!

atari age man

To Joe Santulli:

Judging from your web site, you're probably the man to answer my questions. I played an unusual role in the history of the Atari 2600 - I was the editor of Atari Age, the fanzine/magalog that was published for roughly two years and, at its peak, went to over a million Atari gamers.

At this point I'm rummaging through my collection of EPROM's, unusual cartridges and collectibles and considering selling some of them, assuming the items I sell will bring in enough money to make them worth selling. I have a number of Loaner Cartridges from the Prototype Lab (some of released games, some more unusual, including Asterix, Frog Pond, A-Team and Donald Duck's Speed Boat). I found a Quadrun cartridge still in its (slightly damaged) box. I also have quite a few collectibles - buttons created as giveaways for the release of Pac-Man, issues of Atari Age and other stuff.

So...is there a market for this kind of stuff? The games? The prototypes? The collectible bric-a-brac? Should I be thinking about auctioning items via eBay, or do true Atari collectors have a better spot for bidding on goodies? I appreciate any advice you can offer. (Of course, I'd be happy to buy a copy of your guide, and maybe contribute some info-nuggets to the next edition if I have any tidbits that are worth telling). Thanks.

- Steve Morgenstern

Some bad news, Steve. I'm afraid I'm really the only person who's still interested in that old stuff you have. With Playstation, N64, and now Dreamcast in the mix, gamers just have no use for archaic 8-bit consoles, and memorabilia is even less desirable. Tell you what though, because I have some extra room in my "memories" box up in the attic, I'll give you \$20 for whatever you have lying around. Just (carefully) pack as much of it into a large crate as you can, and send to the address on the back of this issue. You see? Now you have some extra room for your PC stuff.

(I can dream, can't I?)

ebay mania

Joe,

I noticed a guy at Ebay is selling some of the harder-to-find games for the Atari 5200 and I've actually bid on one, Meteorites. I have to be at work when the auction ends, though, so I'll probably be overbid at the last minute. The highest bid on any of his 5200 games is, I believe, for Bounty Bob Strikes Back, which is currently over \$80. That's over twice the price listed in your new guide. When I was checking through Ebay last night, I came across someone selling a copy of Reactor for the 2600. Remembering you recommended it, I bid on it in the last minute and got it for the minimum asking price of

\$2 (no one else had bid). I also was high bidder on two other games: Wizard of Wor for the 5200 (I already had the 2600 version and I especially remember playing the game in the arcade) and Wrecking Crew for the NES. Sometimes people go nuts at Ebay but I was the sole bidder on all 3 of these games and the most expensive, Wizard of Wor, only cost me \$5. Of course, it's a cart-only deal. Another copy which includes the box but no instructions is up for bid and is currently at \$10.50. BTW, if I get that Meteorites game, that would clearly be the jewel of my collection as far as rarity goes. You rate that an "8" in your scarcity ratings and I think the highest on the scarce-o-meter I have now is a "5". I should check on that. I'm not sure how many "5" games I have but the one that comes to mind is Gremlins for the 5200.

I like Ebay though some people are less caring than others when it comes to mailing the games. I just got last week a copy of Kirby's Dream Land 3 and the person mailed the game in one of those Priority One mailing envelopes. The game plays fine but the game box is rather flattened. Ah well!

Finally, I was looking through some DP issues earlier and noticed my letter in a recent issue where I commented I was getting into the 3DO and Saturn. Well, the Saturn thing was short-lived as, for some reason, it just didn't appeal to me that much so I've decided to sell it before I sink too much money into it. I'm definitely keeping the 3DO, though, as I only got it about a half-year ago and already have around 50 games for it including one game I asked about in my letter, Snow Job with Tracy Scoggins. Yes, it does suck! I also have games with Dana Plato (Night Trap) and Tia Carrere (The Daedalus Encounter). I remember seeing ads or stories about a game coming that was to star Yasmine Bleeth. Did that ever come out? Happy Gaming,

- Roger Schoolcraft

I have continuous mixed feelings about Ebay. Once in awhile you get lucky. If you NEED games like Reactor or Wizard of Wor, you should make out great - as long as you can trust the seller to get the stuff to you. The harder-to-find items have sometimes skyrocket-high bids that make you wonder if Ebay has become a Wall Street investor's tool. I hope you got Meteorites at a "fair" price (under \$100), too often I see games like that with such wild numbers that I'm wondering how many middle class would-be collectors might shy away from the hobby.

On the other hand, you can find some things that just never show up anywhere else. As I write this, there's a Venturevision Rescue Terra I for the Atari 2600 for bid, a game I've never seen except in auctions, and in our collective opinions as rare as Chase the Chuckwagon and Crazy Climber, two better-known titles in the "really hard to find" category. It's going at \$50 with about two days left, I suspect it will go for about \$100 or more if one of those Wall Streeters

see it.

Onto the 3DO: I don't remember the game Yasmine was supposed to be in, but whatever it was, it wasn't released. I wonder what happened first - the fall of the 3DO or someone waking up and realizing that having a big name "talent" on your game isn't going to be enough to sell it. I guess we'll never know.

nostalgia part two

Amen, Joe. I just read your article about the Intellivision. I am a collector and own all the Atari's, the ColecoVision, The RCA Studio II, and about 4 Intellivisions. Back in the early 80's my Intellivision was always hot. I played it all the time. I think it had the most creative games on any system. Games like Utopia, Sea Battle, Lock n Chase (no wannabe, this baby had Beethoven licks and played like no maze game before), and almost all the Imagic games. I think Atlantis was my favorite there, that saucer! Anyway, I was struck by your comment that your system lasts about 15 minutes and that you thought it was the power supply. My prettiest one is losing it's mind after about 10 minutes. The graphics start to have horizontal lines in them and soon the game logic doesn't follow anymore and it all just stops. Do you think that is power supply? I am just getting in to fixing them a little bit. I found an extra small board for it. The one that rides atop the main board (maybe named Onnapop?) I was thinking of replacing that and seeing what happened. But it sounds like your problem. Do you know of any sources for parts for this machine? Do you have any? I have parts for the 2600, the 5200, their joysticks and the Atari 400/800 computers. I could trade if you need anything like that. Anyway, great to meet an Intellivision lover. Ta ta for now,

- Jim White

Jim, welcome to the world of classic game consoles! Though durable, you have to find creative ways to maintain your machines if you plan on frequently using them. Fortunately, an Intellivision is fairly easy to get your hands on and my suggestion is to keep a second console around in case your first one craps out. It's not like having a "second" Playstation... you can get an Intellivision console for less than \$20, and that buys you peace of mind when you're really yearning for another game of Lock N Chase.

By the way, I think you're the first person I've ever met to give kudos to that particular game. Did you know that there are two versions of Lock N Chase? The original 6K version is rather difficult to control (which is why many people find this game frustrating). An 8K improved version was also released. You can tell which one you have by watching the animation when you "die". If your character "collapses" into his hat, you have the updated version. Check it out!

I, Robotron

by Dave Giarrusso

I was checking out of the grocery store the other day, when, suddenly and out of nowhere, Barbara Walters walked straight up to me, looked me squarely in the eye, and asked me in her Shatneresque way, "Dave, if you were a video game, what video game would you be?" "Wow, how strange," I thought, "she knew my name." Further thinking on my part led me to believe that she must have stolen a glance at my credit card as I was about to pay for my groceries.

I looked up, then down, then up, then down while I thought about it, and finally, now looking Barbara squarely in the eye I responded, "That's an easy one. **Robotron:2084**."

She nodded as if in complete and instantaneous understanding, almost as if that was the answer she knew I would give. As I moved once again to swipe my credit card to pay for my items, she stopped my hand, threw the clerk a fifty and went on her way.

"Wow, how strange," I thought, "those new fifties really do look like phony baloney money. Oh, yeah, and she also paid for my groceries!" A few weeks later, the realization that these events were not very strange at all would hit me like a ton of bricks. You see, everyone out there has played **Robotron**. Everyone. Okay, maybe not everyone, but certainly, everyone who considers themselves to be an avid video game player. For example, since you, the reader, are a current subscriber of Digital Press, I can say with absolute certainty that you have played **Robotron**. If you are reading a friend's copy of this fine fanzine and have not played **Robotron**, then shame on you! Go out and get your own subscription! Oh, yeah, and go out and find a **Robotron** machine. In fact, make that your first priority. See, you haven't lived, I mean really, truly, lived until you've played **Robotron**. It's the single greatest arcade game of all time. Since Eternity. It really is. As such, it would make sense that Barbara expected me to respond with that answer, therefore, the entire scenario isn't all that odd, from a certain point of view. After all, many of the truths that we cling to...aah, never mind.

Tracking down this mighty machine shouldn't prove to be too difficult, even sixteen years after its creation. The difficult part will be wading through all of the players who are crowded around it in a sugar-filled, zombified, hypnotic state anxiously awaiting their turn. Better keep a stack of quarters and an ice cold bottle of Coke or root beer handy. If you can't manage to hunt down the real deal, a variety of emulators, including the excellent Playstation disc, are available. For the sake of argument and

authenticity though, let's find that actual five foot ten, three hundred pound upright monster. Yeah, that's the one!

Looks like a simple enough creature. Futuristically lettered backlit marquee indicating that we are, indeed, at the mercy of the mighty **Robotron:2084**. Control panel? Couple o' joysticks complete with

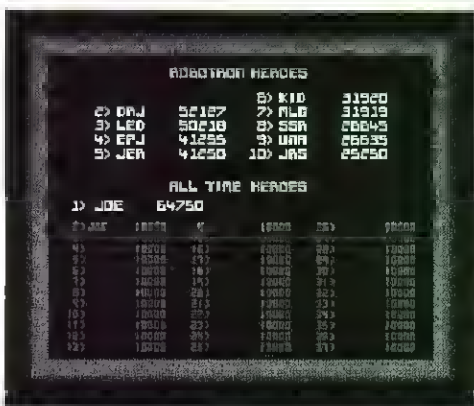
red ball on top, one to move and one to fire, powerful, straightforward, elegant in its simplicity. Nice slate gray cabinet exterior, with the standard Williams template lettering in bright red. Could this vivid marking be foreshadowing the wild melee contained within this beast. Yes. You'd better believe it. Go ahead. Drop your quarter in. I dare you. I double dare you. Do it. Go on. Now press the start button... Ah, another brave warrior joins our masses.

Robotron is the undisputed king of the arcade that redefined those thrill-a-second games where the odds are overwhelming, the graphics are fantastic, and the foes are deadly. Add

to the mix the fact that any clown can drop in a quarter and figure out the objective in three seconds, and not only have you got yourself a winner, you've got an instant classic. I don't like to stand at a machine for longer than eight seconds before I can begin playing it, and if the list of possible moves and combinations of elements is longer than my own rambling banter, then I can't possibly begin playing quickly enough and I'm outta there. If I wanna read, I'll pick up a book. Even a lousy one. Or write one. Even a lousy one.

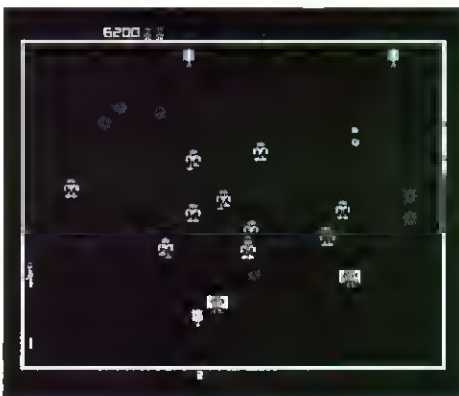
So. No game can really get the adrenaline pumping like **Robotron** does. You have to think fast and react even faster, and, well, if you choose not to, the length of your entire game will be shorter than the screen time devoted to actual dialogue in "Rambo." Eugene Jarvis, the mad genius behind the game is what you would want every game designer to be. He's brilliant, overly and sincerely enthusiastic about his craft, and, well, out of his gourd...lucky for us. Okay, at the risk of breaking my promise not to go over what we all already know about **Robotron**, I will briefly touch on the story and objective here, in case there are any novice players among us who didn't run down to the nearest arcade like they should have about ten minutes ago.

It is the future. It's 2084 AD, to be precise, and, that wacky species, the humans, have somehow managed to engineer a series of robots that are so incredibly intelligent, that they, the Robotrons, have decided to wipe us, the humans, out. These days, you don't have to be incredibly intelligent to see that perhaps the human species should be wiped out, but, well, hell. We still haven't managed



ROBOTRON HEROES					
1> DAN	52127	5> KID	31920		
2> LEO	50510	6> NLO	31910		
3> EPI	41255	7> SSA	28045		
4> JEN	41250	8> WNA	28035		
		9> JAS	25250		

ALL TIME HEROES					
1> JOE	64750				
2> JAE	18070	11> JAE	18070	12> JAE	18070
3> JAE	18070	13> JAE	18070	14> JAE	18070
4> JAE	18070	15> JAE	18070	16> JAE	18070
5> JAE	18070	17> JAE	18070	18> JAE	18070
6> JAE	18070	19> JAE	18070	20> JAE	18070
7> JAE	18070	21> JAE	18070	22> JAE	18070
8> JAE	18070	23> JAE	18070	24> JAE	18070
9> JAE	18070	25> JAE	18070	26> JAE	18070
10> JAE	18070	27> JAE	18070	28> JAE	18070
11> JAE	18070	29> JAE	18070	30> JAE	18070
12> JAE	18070	31> JAE	18070	32> JAE	18070



to invent the Robotrons. Life is so fraught with paradoxes.

Anyway, "you" are the only hope for the human race, and, as such, must run around like a maniac trying to A) destroy all of the Robotrons and B) save all of the remaining humanoids. The humans come in three flavors, "Mommy," "Daddy," and of course, little "Mikey." The Robotrons include the myriad Grunts, the indestructible Hulks, and the inscrutable Brains, Spheroids and Quarks, just to touch on a few. They've all gotta go, and it's either you or them, so get off your butt and get moving. Now that we're all up to speed on the basics of this fine game, let's just shoot the breeze on why it's so damn exciting to play.

Of the many facets that make **Robotron** such an incredibly exciting game to play, one immediately stands out: it simply grabs you by the balls the second you begin playing and doesn't ever let go. Ever. Well, until your game ends. No, scratch that. Until you run out of quarters. Unless you happen to be a girl person. In that case, it must grab you by some other appendage or appendages, take your pick, and, well, after that, we're all on the same bus ride of electronic fun. **Robotron**, like so many of the Williams classic arcade tyrants, starts out on the "pretty difficult" end of the scale and very quickly progresses to "absurdly difficult." Perhaps not as quickly as **Sinistar** or **Stargate**, but certainly more so than **Defender** or **Joust**. Or even **Blaster**, the first person sequel. Anyhoo, it's tough, and if you're not up to snuff, you'll know it after the first few boards. Boy, will you ever know.

Perhaps my best (translation: Dave really is nuts) **Robotron** anecdote begins with the first Atari 800XL computer game that I bought. Yup, it was **Robotron**. We had just gotten that top o' the line computer for Christmas, and, well, while no games came along with it, I quickly remedied that situation, and with a bang, on the day after Santa Claus dropped by. I managed to snatch the last remaining copy of **Robotron** from a local Hills store, ran home, and played it. And played it. And played it. "Way too cool," I thought, "**Robotron** at home, and it even has the dual joystick controlled game play!"

It sure was, and it sure did. The box it came in contained the vacu-molded plastic joystick coupler and once they were in there, you were set. Well, at least, you should have been set. That is, probably, most everyone out there was set. Everyone except me.

See, what I had inadvertently done was, well, I had put the sticks in there backwards. Yeah. Brilliant. Instead of the "move" stick on the left, where it should have been, I put it on the right, where, of course, the "fire" stick should have been. In a related story, I managed to put my Mensa application in the envelope that my phone bill was supposed to be delivered in and vice versa. Mensa would have called me and laughed in my face, but, well, since my phone got turned off as a result of the fact that the phone company received my application to Mensa instead of my phone payment, they just laughed at me through the US mail and informed me that should I ever get the urge to send them another application, I'd have a better chance of winning the state lottery than having them actually read through the thing. Lousy eggheads! Well, no big deal, right? Right??

Wrong. Wrong, sort of. Aside from the purist standpoint of having the joysticks backward like a bozo, I had created a problem that made playing the real deal a very strange ritual. Since I had been playing the game at home so much, and since, as a result, I had not been going to the arcade as often to play it, I unlearned what I had learned and relearned how to play it, but, backwards! Now when I ventured to the arcade to play **Robotron**, I was forced to play with my hands crisscrossed over one another like some sort of yoga

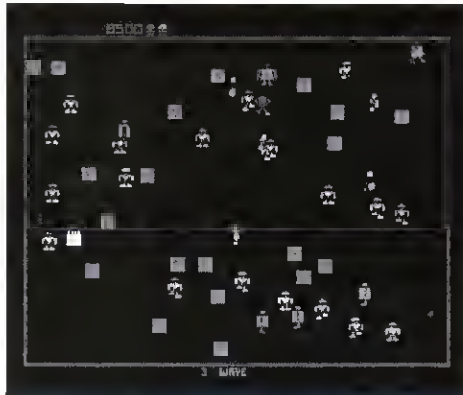
practicing monk of the arcade. Need more wackiness, throw in the fact that I met an extremely cute girl at the arcade one of those days. No, really. There was a girl at the arcade, and, if that wasn't difficult enough to believe, dammit all, she was a **Robotron** fanatic! Her name was always up there on top of the high score board, and, guess what – wow, she actually liked me. Well, she did, until we tried to play **Robotron**. Here's a pointer for you guys at home: playing **Robotron** with your hands tangled up on the control panel like you're trying to mug yourself while simultaneously typing up your college thesis and balancing your checkbook does not impress the

chicks. Once she saw that, it was all over. "What the hell is this, some kind of joke?" Yeah. On me. Wanna hear something even funnier? That bizarre method of playing stuck with me for years and years, through **Smash TV**, through **Total Carnage**, and up until very, very recently, when I finally managed to make a breakthrough via a combination of the upright **Black Widow** and the Playstation 2084 emulation. Now, at least the way I'm playing looks "normal," even if I'm really not.

Some final little miscellaneous revelations concerning **Robotron**: when you are ticked off at that girl who dumped you because you're perfect and so forth, you can simply allow all of the female humanoids to get wasted by the Hulks. "Take that, vile woman!" Same goes for anyone else who might be foolish enough to have incurred your wrath, just pick the appropriate character from the three and allow them to meet their maker, or, even push the Hulks into them. Lousy humans! Something interesting that occurred to me the other night as I was playing this masterpiece of a game is that, well, it could really happen. It really could. Man could create some sort of advanced robot that

would then turn on the collective "us" because it realized that we are inferior, and then wipe us out. Also, as in real life, the robots, super-intelligent as they may be, do reveal their fatal flaw and prove that they were created by an imperfect being. If they're so brilliant, why are they constantly walking blindly into stationary mines and committing cyber-suicide? I mean, you'd think that such an advanced "race" would be able to skirt right around those flippin' things. My explanation, and one that really does seem at least relatively plausible, is that they have become so focused on wiping out the inferior human race that the mines are no longer a concern, and, if they should eat electric death while trying to fulfill their plan to convincingly dominate the universe, then so be it. Oh, those wacky robots.

Yeah, a few weeks after the Barbara Walters incident, I realized that the whole incident between her and I was not as strange as I had originally thought. **Robotron** is just the greatest game ever made, and it always will be. McGWires will continue to beat Marises, Olympic athletes will continue to have their respective rec-



(Continued on page 28)

REcollecting

by Jeff Cooper

Most of you DP readers collect for the Atari 2600, and many of you have been at it for years. Question: what would it be like if you lost everything and had to start your 2600 collection all over again from scratch? Assuming you couldn't run out and just buy everything, would it be possible to come up with a good collection again? How does collecting today differ from, say, six years ago? Over the last year or so, I found out.

Fourteen months ago my 2600 collection consisted of zero. A bunch of dusty shelves. A pile of empty cart holders. I had sold my entire 2600 collection a few months earlier. The collection consisted of around 500 different carts (a handful of PAL releases and a handful of label variations thrown in); something like 325 were boxed. It had taken me over six years to put it all together, and I thought it was among the better collections around. I wrote a lengthy apologia for DP explaining my decision to sell, pointing out that I'd reached a point where the rares I needed were prohibitively expensive and I couldn't trade for them. And I pointed out that the 2600 never was my "real" nostalgic system, etc. But, in hindsight, the fact is that I needed the money to pay off a bunch of medical bills (yeah, yeah, I know, wah wah wah).



Well the good news is that I am more or less back. With gems like an original **Quadrun**, a boxed **Q*Bert's Qubes**, **Sword of Saros**, **Survival Island**, **Glib**, and a mint in box—er—styrofoam **Tooth Protectors** recently coming in, I am edging very close to 500 carts again and have surpassed 300 boxes. Admittedly, I'm still two or three megarares away from where I was. I'll never see another **Cubicolor** again. And my new box collection contains significantly fewer rares than my original one. But if you had told

me that in a little over a year I'd be able to put together a collection that approached the old one, I'd have recommended that you put yourself out to pasture.

What's different about collecting today?

When starting over late in 1997, I faced a fundamentally different scenario, I think, relative to what I faced when I began collecting late in 1990. For the most part, I put my first collection together through the "big three": buying, trading, and flea-marketing. Some huge obstacles exist today in all three of these areas. The obstacles are so big that, when I began re-collecting again, I didn't expect a whole lot of success.

The biggest change and most obvious obstacle to collecting today is the money factor, which has changed everything, including the

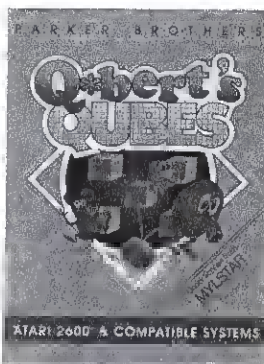
nature of both buying and trading. In the "early days," it was not difficult to purchase rarities for next to nothing, even from people who knew exactly what they had. I recall buying a **Crazy Climber** from a collector for \$30. A perfect mint boxed **Miner 2049er Vol. 2** cost me all of \$13 from someone else. A brand new boxed **Halloween** cost me a little less. I remember one collector selling me a sealed **Boing!** for \$20, while another sold me around sixty mint boxes, including some great rares, for a buck a piece. Nowadays a



Crazy Climber will routinely bring at least \$125, **Halloween** often goes for \$100, and even common trash that I used to spit at, like a **Star Wars Jedi Arena**, can bring \$30, if boxed. Not only do 2600 games cost much more but, with two kids added to the equation, I've got less money to spend on the hobby.

Trading has changed a whole lot, too. In general, hobbyists are much more sophisticated and knowledgeable today. In the days before price guides and scarcity guides, trading was almost comical.

Early on, I had no idea what I was doing, nor did the people I was trading with. I remember trading a king's ransom worth of Vectrex rares for a 2600 **Fathom**. But that same guy traded me a **Chase the Chuckwagon** for seven carts, only one of which was somewhat rare. Trading was just different: you had doubles, the other guy had doubles, so you filled some holes in his collection and he filled some holes in yours. People were also willing to trade across systems, because it was just as important to fill a slot in your Colecovision collection as it was to fill one in your 2600 collection. Few people today will trade you a really rare 2600 cart for a really rare Colecovision cart, because everyone knows that 2600 carts are "worth more." But in the olden days of 1992, people would routinely trade me rare 2600 carts — even up - for rare CV carts. Some people have a lot of trouble coming to grips with the fact that it no longer works this way. The nerds in the usenet groups constantly remind



us that "collecting should be all about the love of collecting and the love of the games, and 'value' shouldn't enter into it!" Nerdo reality check: whether it should be that way or not the rules have changed. If you wanna trade your 2600 **Q*Bert's Qubes** for a better-playing CV **Q*Bert's Qubes**, you should have no trouble at all finding a taker.

That brings us to the third of the great triumvirate, flea-marketing. Despite the

(Continued on page 28)

Game & Watch Primer, part 1

by Clint Dyer

1980 is the year. Nintendo, a company primarily known for its arcade games (Donkey Kong, etc.) releases this line of Game & Watches. And the world of handhelds would never be the same! Being a handheld collector for a long time, I've seen several hundred handhelds and heard of even more. The Game & Watch line really has no equal. These units, despite their LCD screens (a death sentence in terms of handhelds) remain among the most popular and sought after handhelds there are. Why? A few reasons that I can think of. First, the line of handhelds in general plays better than any other line of handhelds. The games are simply more fun to play and have the best replay value of any handhelds. In addition, the line has a certain un-measurable charm that is missing in most other LCD games. The cases are compact and arguably, cooler than any other handhelds. The most important of those reasons is the gameplay, but without all those factors combined, these handhelds wouldn't be nearly as popular.

The following information was gathered from several different sources. Camiel Dobbelaar (dobbe@xs4all.nl) was the one who really got me started on the idea of doing this when he combined information taken from the July/August issue of Retrogames, a foreign fanzine. He noticed several different things, but the most interesting is that Nintendo used a very specific numbering system with it's games. You'll notice that the original silvers start with 01 and it goes up from there, with each variety of G&W having a new starting point. What's most interesting about that is that there is plenty of room for more in almost all the categories. One thing that doesn't make sense about their numbering scheme is the first initials before the numbers. Some titles, it's easy to tell why they were named that way. FL for Flagman, MH for Manhole, etc. Others, the letters don't make any sense. AC for Ball, RC for Fire, etc. Good work Camiel, I knew that college degree was good for something! :-). The reviews and descriptions of the types were all written by me, with help from Michael Davidson (pinwiz@pinwiz.demon.co.uk) and Camiel on some that I don't have.

Original Silver G&W's are among the smallest LCD handhelds made in terms of unit size. The screen, however, is fairly large for it's compact size. The screen is surrounded by a silver metal plate, which gives these versions of G&W's their name. In terms of rarity, these are pretty hard to come by, my guess is because they were the first of the line and probably didn't get the advertising that the later titles did.

Original Gold G&W's are exactly the same as the silver line, except (surprise) they have a gold metal plate around the screen. They are not quite as hard to find as their Original Silver counterparts, but still darned hard to find.

Original Silver (01-05)

AC-01 BALL A juggling game where you must keep balls from falling, just like real life juggling. The gameplay is simple. Move left and right to automatically catch the balls and throw them into the air

again. Mego, another well-known handheld company had an exact copy of this game made for them with the same name and everything!



FL-02 FLAGMAN This is a memory game, roughly equivalent to Simon, a matching game where you have to match certain sequences of patterns. It reminds me a lot of Milton Bradley's Simon handheld, except that it uses numbers (1, 2, 3 & 4) instead of colors. Mego, another well-known handheld company had an exact copy of this game made for them, with the same name and everything!



MT-03 VERMIN This is one of the few G&W's to use raw violence (Popeye - all types - is another)! The object here is to pound the heads of poor moles before they have a chance to eat your cabbage. It's a simple "Whack-a-Mole" game in handheld form. Mego, another well-known handheld company had an exact copy of this game made for them. The only difference in the two games is the title, Exterminator.



RC-04 FIRE People are jumping out of the building and your job is to get them to the ambulance without letting them splat on the pavement. To accomplish this job, you are armed with only a trampoline and when someone hits it, they will bounce to the next spot on the pavement, where you have to "catch" them again. Continue this all the way to the right and they will bounce into the ambulance (wouldn't that hurt as well, though?) and you get to do it all over again. Mego, another well-known handheld company had an exact copy of this game made for them. The only difference in the two games is the title, Fireman, Fireman.



IP-05 JUDGE This is probably one of the most bizarre G&W's, in that it seems to have almost no play value. The object is to hit your opponent over the head with your mallet before he hits you. Unfortunately, I've not been able to figure out how to hit first or avoid the opponents shots. A stinker of a game to be sure.

Original Gold (06-08 or more)

MH-06 MANHOLE There are 4 holes in the two levels of the street. You have to use a manhole cover to fill the holes before the people fall into the holes and into the water below. This is the same as the Wide Screen version with the same name.

(Continued on page 28)

rAnDom ReVieWs

R-TYPE

Turbografx-16

Hudson

Arcade



After beating "Q-Type", this seemed natural to reviewer Joe Santulli

Element	Joe		
Graphics	8		
Sound	6		
Gameplay	7		
Overall	7		

multi player same time	data save features
decent game ending	hidden stuff
variable skill levels	non-linear gameplay

Before I begin with the details of this fine game, let me first chat with you a moment about all of the things that are inherently wrong with space shooting games. Bear with me for a moment.

Probably the worst job in the whole galaxy is being one of the "bad guys". They really don't have a chance. Ever count how many ships you had to blow up to beat a level? Well inside each one is a tiny pilot. And you blew him up too. You would think after years and years of getting blown up by the likes of you, the boss of the bad guys would get some training for them. A few things they could be taught right off the bat: don't fly in predictable patterns, mix it up... and for God's sake stop lining up behind one another! Don't let the "good guy" get all the power ups... grab some for yourself! Another thing the boss of bad guys should consider are some better ships. Usually the good guys take them out with one tiny bullet. You can't win the galaxy wars with ships like that.

Let's talk about those "bosses" for a minute. Not very bossy, are they? They are presumably in charge of the whole level and what do they do? Wait until all of their support is destroyed and then hang out at the end for a final battle against an enemy that has had a lot of time to collect extra power.

Bosses should show up at the BEGINNING of a level, before any power-ups can be nabbed. Then let the little bad guys clean up. Another thing: never, never FLASH your weak point. And if you're a giant robot with one huge eye in the middle of your chest that blinks and flashes and hurts a lot when it gets hit... cover it up. With metal, preferably.

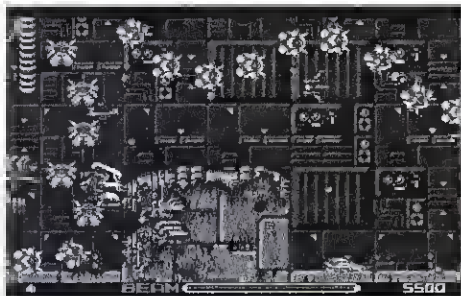
How do "power-ups" work, anyway? In my wildest imagination I can only assume that they are intelligent organic machines that can integrate themselves with the good guy's ship. OK, maybe. If that's true, then why do these intelligent machines just float around (or remain motionless) waiting for the ship to pass over it? If the thing is smart enough to be able to change a ship's weaponry from burst-firing bullets to energy-streamed lasers, it ought to know enough to move itself a little toward the good guy so he doesn't have to kill himself just trying to reach it.

Alright then. **R-Type** is just one of these games featuring all of the things listed above. Hordes of little ships just flying directly into your line of fire, bosses that tip their hand as to their particular weakness, and power-ups that can drastically affect the type of hurtin' you deal. And yet, I can't help but enjoy playing it!

Hudson's classic space shooter is a side-scrolling visual masterpiece, with levels that mix high technology with organic matter. If you've seen the movie *Ghost in the Shell*, you should have a good idea what I'm talking about. The levels are long, difficult, and rewarding. There are six different power-up weapons plus a variable-strength beam weapon (the longer you hold the fire button down, the more powerful the shot). Did I mention the game was difficult? Maybe that was an understatement.

Everything is perfect here except that even at the easiest skill level, this game is insanely difficult. It's not so much that enemy ships and fire are coming at you from 360 degrees, it's that once you're hit (and only once) you have to start the level over with the lowest level of firepower. This is one of those games that you either get through on one ship or you die so many times you'll want to crack the durable little card in half. Fortunately, the card is very durable or mine would, in fact, be cracked in half.

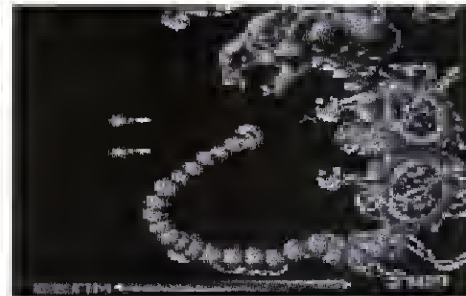
If you like tough ones, this is the game to tackle. I can tell you that it's worth the effort - I've gotten nearly to the end of the game and some of the visuals are spectacular, especially the bosses. TG-16 owners were lucky enough to get 8 levels in their game. PC Engine gamers only got 4!



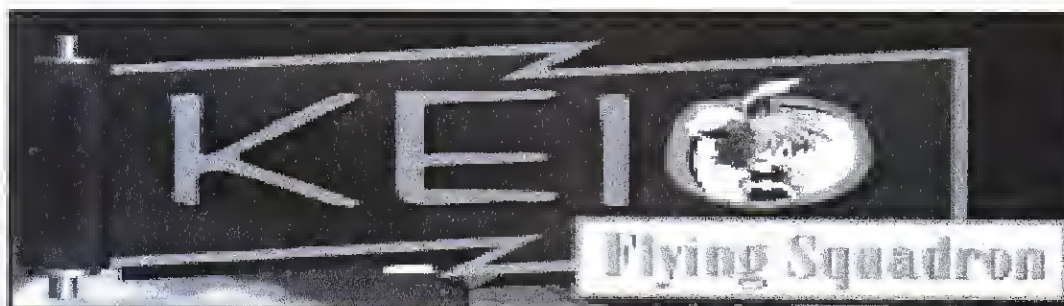
They really throw a lot at you in this one. Gotta be quick to survive.

CHEATER

Set both turbo switches to maximum turbo. At the title screen, hold SELECT and button 1 at the same time and watch the continues rack up! Press RUN before the demo begins to cash in.



The boss design is exquisite—like things out of the Alien movies.



Sega CD

JVC

Shooter



Who else to review a game featuring a young girl in a bunny suit but Joe Santulli?

Element	Joe		
Graphics	8		
Sound	9		
Gameplay	8		
Overall	8		

<input type="checkbox"/>	multi player	<input type="checkbox"/>	data save features
<input type="checkbox"/>	same time	<input type="checkbox"/>	hidden stuff
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	decent game ending	<input type="checkbox"/>	non-linear gameplay
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	variable skill levels	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Ah, young girls in bunny suits... there just aren't enough games with young girls in bunny suits.

Well, I'm not the greatest at these shooter-style games, but I have **Keio Flying Squadron's** number. Although it's not particularly hard, there's another reason why I stuck with it until the end. It does something that should keep any borderline shooter fan happy. It's interesting, and it's fun.

KFS is a side-scrolling shooter, and one of the few "exclusive" Sega CD games that make the system worth owning. No fancy FMV stuff (if you're familiar with the system's games, you'll appreciate this), no exaggerated load times... just a fast, fun, and colorful game. Mechanically, the game isn't much different than any other side-scroller you've ever played, and it certainly takes a page from the **Parodius** book, but it stands as a unique game on its own.

So what's with the young girl in a bunny suit? I can't really explain. Like most Japanese-based anime, you just have to accept it. This particular young girl in a bunny suit rides a baby dragon and has to find a missing key or her grandmother won't let her eat ever again. And she needs the food, trust me. Even Kate Moss would snicker at this girl's scrawny physique. Standing in her way is a massive plot to turn the world into a so-

ciety of super-genius raccoons, a plot hatched by one particularly clever raccoon who has a fortress inside of Noah's Ark and the power of the U.S. Armed Forces on his side. Seriously. You can't make this stuff up unless you're a Japanese anime guy.

As you might expect from a game with this kind of plot, the characters are far from normal. Actually, they're hilarious. There are raccoons spinning in saucer-like ships, pup-pies on flying carpets, airborne fish, frogs mounted by more raccoons, and lots of others too numerous to detail. The bosses are quite inventive, usually taking up the full screen and following the "hidden weakness" formula that I particularly like (kind of like **R-Type** bosses). In addition, each level has at least one mini boss to keep you off-balance. The characters in this game are without equal in a shooter, although nothing beats the bosses in **Parodius** this game has it's overall cast beat by a mile.

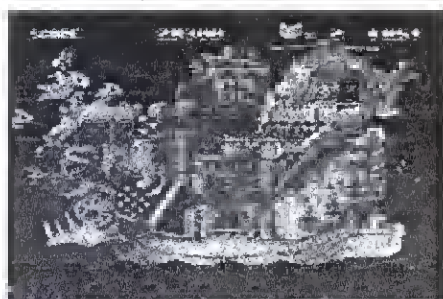
The music is a mix of feudal-Japanese pop and Sega CD plain vanilla overtures. It's almost schizophrenic, moving from hyperactive to soothing. I suppose that just fits the overall chaos of the game! Sound effects are superb, and play an important element in the game. When you lose one of your optional satellite dragons (that follow you around and fire at will), you have to pause a moment

while a new one materializes. The best way to time it is to listen to Rami's (the bunny gal) verbal prompt. Everything from the "thud" of your weapon hitting the target to the various meows, barks, moos and yelps is done just right, and really enhances the crazy atmosphere of the visuals.

There are humorous cut-scenes with minimal animation, the opening and closing scenes are fully animated and worth watching through – especially if you're a fan of anime.

The game is not without its problems, but they're negligible. For instance, there are only two kinds of weapons – a straight ahead shot and a three-way shot – each of which is upgradeable to several strengths but more would have been better here. Your secondary weapon helps make up for it, with three different kinds of attack. I would have also liked the game to have had more "over the top" attacks to fit the style of the characters. Instead, it resorts to shooting fireballs. Ho hum.

I'll go ahead and give **KFS** the "best Sega CD shooter" nod, just edging out **Gate of Thunder** and **Robo Aleste**. It's like a goofy interactive anime, and it's fun to play. That's a recipe right out of my favorite cookbook.



The bosses are not only well-drawn and fascinating to watch, they're HUGE!



It's uncomfortable to ride a dragon in a skimpy bunny suit. Try it and see!



ACTIVISION CLASSICS

Playstation

Activision

Action



Review by the
man who made
Pitfall Harry "a
man"...
John Hardie

Element	John	Joe	Dave
Graphics	6	7	3
Sound	2	2	2
Gameplay	4	4	0
Overall	2	3	1

<input type="checkbox"/>	multi player same time	<input type="checkbox"/>	data save features
<input type="checkbox"/>	decent game ending	<input type="checkbox"/>	hidden stuff
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	variable skill levels	<input type="checkbox"/>	non-linear gameplay

Anyone who knows our fearless editor, Mr. Santulli, knows that he is very liberal when it comes to keeping our articles related to each month's theme. You might then think that I'm stretching it by reviewing **Activision Classics** for the Playstation, because it happens to contain a couple of 2600 shooters. Actually, I decided to review this product because it should be taken out back and shot (not a bad fate for the people who authorized it's release either).

Upon first hearing of the **Activision Classics** Package, I rejoiced! Images of the old Activision games swirled through my head. The magic was back! "Finally", I thought, "Activision was going to make up for the horrid 3-volume Action Pack series that they released for the PC". I excused their previous blunder, "Damn PC's are so quirky anyway!". Now at last they could atone for their sins and utilize the raw power of the Playstation to bring us picture-perfect translations. No more wondering if it would run on this system or that. Now there was a standard, and I was confident I would soon be tossing out 30 of my old Activision carts (NOT!) since I could now possess them on a single-disc.

Upon release, I obtained my treasure for a paltry \$30. How could I lose at that price?? Look at the gems they bestowed upon us: **Atlantis, Barnstorming, Boxing, Chopper Command, Crackpots, Cosmic Commander, Dolphin, Dragster, Enduro, Fishing Derby, Freeway, Frostbite, Grand Prix, H.E.R.O., Ice Hockey, Kaboom!, Keystone Kapers, Laser Blast, Megamania, Pitfall!, Plaque Attack, River Raid, River Raid II, Seaquest, Skiing, Sky Jinx, Spider Fighter, Stampede, Starmaster, and Tennis.** Oh what a glorious day! I returned home and popped this baby into my PSX. I was greeted by a cool intro sequence with some good music and various game screens flying around. So far, so good. I pressed start and was greeted by a sampled sound of Pitfall Harry jumping onto a vine. What's this? A T.V. with a block of wood on

top (whoops that's a 2600) hooked to a Romscanner-type device on the right with all the carts in it. We were smoking now. What presentation! Redemption was almost here! I quickly selected Pitfall and heard the digitized voice say "Activision Classics" as it loaded. Here we go!

<pause>

I was speechless. In what should have been a room filled with comments like: "Yahoo!" "Alright!" "Yesss!" "Wheeeeeee!" there was a deafening silence. My feelings ranged from wonder and dismay, "How could this happen?" "What had gone wrong?" to vengeance, "Wait till I find out who was responsible for this!"

Enough of the play-by-play, let me tell you what is wrong with **Activision Classics**. The first and most annoying problem is the sound. After being teased with some sampled sound in the intro, you are treated to a muffled overture of in-game sounds. I kept looking to see if my wife had thrown a sheet over my speakers. It's so bad, that it forces you to spend most of your time looking for some type of in-game audio adjustment that corrects the problem. The accuracy of the sounds is off also. Using **River Raid** as an example, in the original version, flying over fuel tanks makes a "ding ding ding" sound that goes off as your fighter flies over them and refuels, but in the Playstation CD, it's just a continuous, solid sound effect. It's really disappointing after hearing the opening sequence sounds.

The emulation is simply horrendous. Why they can't emulate a 2600 on a PSX is beyond me. The choppy frame rate and sluggish controls are most noticeable with **River Raid, Pitfall!, H.E.R.O. and Spider Fighter**. The choppiness is particularly magnified in **H.E.R.O. and River Raid**. These two were smooth as butter on the original Atari 2600. Collision detection is not accurate either. Perhaps in trying to speed things up, they fouled up the collision detection. If you try shooting the fuel tanks or helicopters in **River Raid** and you'll see what I mean.

Lastly, the colors are off on several titles compared to the originals and many just had a fuzzy look to them.

There are also some minor annoyances which maybe I'm being too picky about. The most notable things are the fact that when you exit a game, you go back to the main title screen where you have to press Start to get to the game select screen. This gets old real quick as does the digitized voice that says "Activision Classics". I also have to wonder why they chose to exclude other games like **Decathlon, Private Eye, Space Shuttle, Pitfall II, Robot Tank, Beamrider, Oink!** and the other Imagic games.

Activision also overlooked a few things that might have helped to salvage this disc. The first oversight is the lack of analog controller support. **Kaboom!** needs to be played with a mouse, **NegCon**, or the **Namco Paddle Controller**. It just doesn't work properly with a joypad (although the frame-rate is so bad that it probably wouldn't have mattered anyway). The second saving grace that they overlooked is in the documentary department. There's no video footage, interviews, scans of various memorabilia, or any other type of archive information on the disc.

Overall, this was a big disappointment. One of the programmers even posted online saying how Activision was more concerned with rushing the product out to make a quick buck, than having it be true to the original. This is at least the second time Activision has shanked us, and I've gotten to the point where if I drop something and have to bend over to pick it up, I nervously glance behind me to see if some guy with an Activision name-tag is running towards me.

Honestly, I'm the first person to support any effort at classic game compilations. I'm always the first in line to buy. But this is one time when \$1 a game is too much. Hopefully they won't try and screw us out of another \$30 bucks by putting the titles they overlooked along with later releases (**Double Dragon, Commando, Rampage**, etc.) into Volume 2.

SPACE MEGAFORCE

rAnDom
ReVieWs

Super Nintendo

Toho

Shooter



By the master of
all time, space,
and also shaving
cream, Keita Tada

Element	Keita	Joe	
Graphics	9	9	
Sound	9	7	
Gameplay	9	9	
Overall	9	9	

multi player same time	data save features
decent game ending	hidden stuff
variable skill levels	non-linear gameplay

For shooter fans, just the mention of a game developed by Compile will pump them up and have them talking about the glory days of 16-bit gaming. I mean, who hasn't experienced the total exhilaration of such epic blast-fests like **M.U.S.H.A.**, **Blazing Lasers** and **Zanac**? Curiously, Compile's best effort, **Space Megaforce**, has by and large been ignored by a large segment of the gaming populace because it was made available for the Super Nintendo – not exactly a system known for killer 2D shooters. But trust me when I say this game (known as **Super Aleste** in Japan) is, bar none, THE best 16-bit overhead shooter that puts all others to shame.

Prior to migrating over to the SNES, the Aleste series had made appearances on the Sega Master System (as **Power Strike** in the U.S.) and the Soldier series on the PC Engine, and almost everything in between. The Aleste games showed the sprite capabilities of these machines better than anyone else. And, back in time when players were making fun of the SNES's processing speed (or lack thereof) – justified because of cases of severe slowdown in almost every first-generation shooter on the machine – along came **Space Megaforce** to banish any claims of Nintendo's 16-bitter's inferiority in this department.

Space Megaforce is exemplary in so many respects that it's difficult to point out

its best virtue. For starters, its weapon system is unrivaled, even by contemporary 32-bit shooters. Besides the now-standard smart bomb at your disposal, there are eight possible upgradeable gadgets that you can pick up and add to your arsenal. Also very welcome is the freedom to change their attack mode at will. For example, you can choose between standard or less powerful heat-seeking missiles, or lock the position of the **Gradius**-style multiples. The sheer



We know SNES can do graphics, but **THIS** detailed and **THIS** fast? You betcha.

amount – and diversity – of firepower is was unprecedented for its time and still holds up well today.

Graphically, it holds up nicely against its counterparts. Explosions are huge and some of the special effects are trippy. Mode 7 graphics are used liberally, especially in the HUGE level 2 boss that scales in and out, and rotates smoothly. And check out the warping effect of the boss at the end of the Moonbase! I almost fainted when I first

saw it. Backgrounds are nicely detailed and the SNES's color palette is put to good use here. Overall, it's not as earth-shattering visually as Konami's **Axelay**, but then again, nothing touches the sights in **Axelay**. On the audio side, Compile really took advantage of the SNES's superior sound capabilities. Sound effects are crystal clear, and a dose of voice samples are thrown in for good measure. The techno tune has some rim-rattling bass that's arranged in stereo. The music is actually very cool and gets you pumped up. In fact, I'm looking for the **Super Aleste** music soundtrack, so if anyone knows where I can get one, let me know! Overall, **Space Megaforce** goes beyond the call of duty in the audiovisual department.

So what makes **Space Megaforce** better than other Compile shooters like **M.U.S.H.A.**, **Gunhead** and **Robo Aleste**? First of all, in contrast to the aforementioned three titles and **Spriggan** on the PC Engine CD, the whole style is different. Whereas the others had unappealing feudal-Japan mech enemies, **Space Megaforce** is an all-out space themed game that gives it a harder edge. The game also has more levels, better weapons, more enemies on-screen (without any slowdown), and each of the stages has much more variety than others put out by Compile. Add heaps of eye and ear candy and you have the most polished and playable 2D scrolling shooter.. perhaps ever.

many systems

Namco/Atari

Arcade



Shot at, set on
fire, doused in
acid, then blown
up but still written
by Dave Giarrusso

Element	Dave	Joe	
Graphics	7	7	
Sound	7	5	
Gameplay	8	6	
Overall	8	6	

multi player same time	data save features
decent game ending	hidden stuff
variable skill levels	non-linear gameplay

Three things immediately spring to mind when I think of the Atari/Namco arcade game **Xevious**: "Starcade", **Xevious**' background tune, and, the somewhat-slightly-ahead-of-its-time-space-age-metallic look to the whole thing.

Remember "Starcade"? Even as kids, we couldn't escape the fact that the lamer than lame host was incapable of coherent thought, the gaming questions they asked were beyond ridiculous ("What makes Ms. Pac-Man different from Pac-Man? A) a wig, Lee press on nails, and an American Express Gold Card or, B) a bow!" They actually asked questions that were this bad!), and even the announcer was awful, but, well, damn. You still just HAD to watch it despite all of its shortcomings and condescending emcee to see all the cool video games that didn't make it into your local game room.

It was through Starcade that I first witnessed **Xevious**. One look was enough to make a lasting impression on me, not unlike seeing the ducks outside your office 'frolicking' during your lunch break for the first time. **Xevious** was so cool, in fact, that Starcade even took the liberty of lifting the infectious background music and playing it during the show's commercial break bumpers and brief "news segments."

As pilot of the Solvalou, you must bomb and shoot the various enemies that stand between you and the dreaded Andor Genesis mother ship. **Xevious** employs a bombing sight that is located just ahead of the Solvalou and is reminiscent of the crosshair from **Missile Command**. When

targets are in range, the sight glows red, signaling the player to bomb the hell out of the landscape. Initially, the designers planned to include a computerized voice that would have actually said, "target in range, please bomb the hell out of the landscape," but technology constraints at the time led them to the similarly effective "red flashing targeting site" technique instead.

The various craft that attack from the air are constructed from some sort of space age metal, but, brother, it isn't adamantium - one shot from your cannon is enough to eliminate any of them, with the exception of the "Bacula Resistor Shields." Since people usually think of "Quantum Leap" or "Murphy Brown" immediately upon hearing the mention of Bacula, we'll call them "mirrors." The mirrors are indestructible, and spin around as they fly toward your ship in a manner that, as one noteworthy critic pointed out, "looks really, really cool."

After a while, you'll reach the mother ship, a hulking metal thing hovering right there in the middle of the screen. As you approach it, it begins to back away, so the best strategy is to try to get the jump on it and bomb the center port while it is briefly moving toward you. While trying to eighty-six this technological behemoth, hundreds of really obnoxious black-lacquer balls attack you unmercifully, and often succeed at thwarting your attempts to destroy the mother ship. Huh-huh, balls. A good rule of thumb for **Xevious** is: the less phantom or menacing an enemy looks, the more menacing it typically is. Convoluted looking

exhaust ports? Harmless. Boring old silver ball? Deadly.

Xevious contains no powerups, but does contain several "hidden flags" that can be found by systematically dropping bombs everywhere and accidentally hitting one. Picking up a flag tacks an extra life on to your reserve.

Here's an interesting, fact - the tanks in **Xevious** are **Grobda** tanks. Wow, interesting, right? It's interesting because it's sort of a Namco cross-over deal, since **Grobda** is another game produced by Namco. Betcha never thought you'd ever read the words **Grobda** and **Xevious** and Namco so many times in one paragraph, didja?

The first home version of **Xevious** appeared on the 7800, and is an excellent port. 2600 and 5200 versions have surfaced in prototype form, and while Tod Frye's 2600 version is incomplete, much like his "completed" 2600 **Pac-Man**, the respectable 5200 version appears to have been finished. **Xevious** also turned up on the NES, but relinquished its title of best home version when the original arcade game turned up on Namco's Playstation emulation compilation.

Snatch up a copy of **Xevious** and plug it in to your platform of choice. Warning: you may get so involved in the game that you lose all touch with the outside world and constantly walk around in a daze while quietly humming that background music. After a while, your friends and co-workers will learn to ignore you. Trust me. Doo doo dee doo, doo doo dee doo, doo doo dee doo, doo doo dee doo...



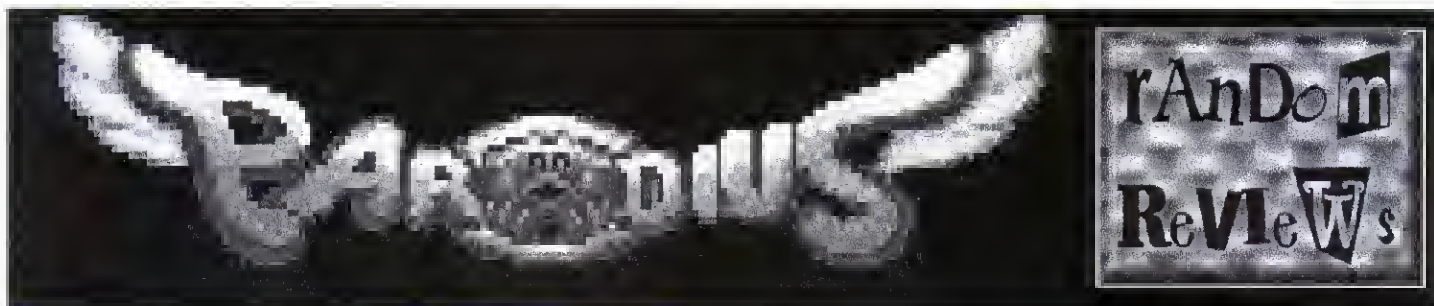
The Atari 5200 version of **Xevious**, only surpassed at home by the 7800 version.

CHEATER

Immediately after the game starts, go to the bottom right hand corner of the screen and continuously drop bombs. Don't fire normal shots until the first set of rings is dangerously close to your ship, then, gun 'em down. You'll see the name of the programmer appear for a couple of seconds.



The 2600 version of **Xevious**. Surpassed by everything. OK, it wasn't complete.



PCE/Super Fami

Konami

Shooter



Kenta Ida supplying the laughs

Element	Kelta	Joe			
Graphics	8	9			
Sound	9	9			
Gameplay	7	8			
Overall	7	8			
				X	
				multi player same time	data save features
				decent game ending	hidden stuff
				variable skill levels	non-linear gameplay

Parodius is another Konami shooter that made an appearance on a variety of sytems. Any recent version is definitely worth checking out, but the NES and MSX versions aren't really worth the time. **Parodius** first made a splash on the Super Fami-com and PC Engine, and for all intents and purposes, they're nearly identical. Sequels later came out on the SFC and Playstation as **Ultimate Parodius**, **Sexy Parodius** (settle down, Beavis, there's no hentai anime to be had here) and "Oshaberu" (talking) **Parodius**. All of them are basically **Gradius** but with a cutesy theme that features a bucket full of pastel colors, anime-style enemies and smiles everywhere. I know, it doesn't mix quite right, but being the Japanese guy that I am, I love it (yeah, I know.. John's rolling his eyes in disgust right about now.)

Don't let the kiddie theme mislead you into thinking **Parodius** is a walk in the park, though, because it's a bear of a game. Gameplay is **Gradius** all the way, through and through, and shares all of the good parts (as well as the drawbacks) of the game that it parodies. There's power-up bar at the bottom except with cute enemies instead of spaceships. The powerups have more or less the same attributes that are found in **Gradius**. You can choose from

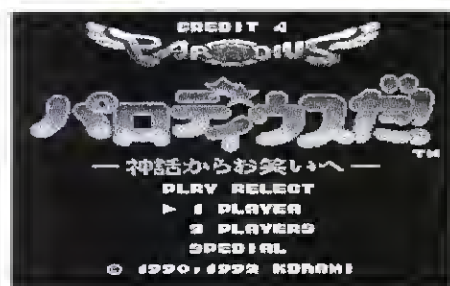
four different characters in **Parodius** — the Vic Viper, Octopus, Twin Bee, or Pentarou the Penguin. The other major new play mode included in this game is the Bell Power: some enemies you kill leave bells behind. Grabbing the basic yellow bell merely increases your score, but shooting the bell changes its the bell to any number of different color. Different bells have different powers: the coolest one is a megaphone shot which destroys foes with your voice (huh?), but the most effective is a short-lived invincibility mode where you become enlarged and can destroy anything in your path a-la **Vanguard**.

In keeping with the circus-like theme, the music compliments **Parodius** beautifully with bouncy (and dare I say catchy) tunes. Quality of the sound effects is also top-notch and the voice-overs are crystal clear and whimsical as well. Graphics on both versions are sharp and the colors vibrant. The characters animate nicely. And when you shoot some of the end level bosses, they start to grow and bloat-up to amazing proportions, even if they become quite pixelated a bit. And what bosses they are! You'll encounter everything from parrots to lips (like on the famous Rolling Stones album cover) to easter island rock heads. But you're used to silliness in Konami games by

now if you've ever played **Goemon** (**Legend of the Mystical Ninja**) and some of the other odd-themed offerings by the company.

The only drawback - and it's a large one in my opinion - is the game's insane difficulty level. As is the case with **R-Type** and **Gradius**, no matter how far you get and how many powerups you've accumulated, you lose everything once you die. There's nothing more frustrating than to kick ass for 30 minutes, only to make a slight mishap and then be left with nothing at an incredibly difficult part of the game. Macho players and masochists might consider this a good thing, but it's a pain in the ass to me! After awhile, you'll get the sinking feeling that it's completely hopeless some of you may even flip off the power switch of your system. It's downright unfair, I say. No amount of skill can get you out of a large hole, especially later in the game when things are coming at you from all corners.

Aside from the nitpick over its insane difficulty level, it's every bit as good as Konami's other 16-bit shooters. And for those who can't hack it bit enjoy the heart-warming setting, there's always other cutesy shooters like **100% Cotton**, **Pop 'N Twinbee** and **Flying Heroes** that are far easier to conquer.



Still hard to believe a game this good was never released in the U.S.



Don't ask to "bring on the dancing girls", you'll be sorry you did.



It's Gradius with a really pretty palette and weird bad guys.

rAnDom ReVieWs

VANGUARD

Arcade/2600/5200

Atari

Arcade



Dave Giarrusso
tells us and
"Luther" a thing
or two about the
Gond

Ever had a "SkyBar"? If you have, then, great! **Vanguard** is like the videogame version of a SkyBar. If not, well, a SkyBar is a milk chocolate candy bar that has four different sections, each of which contains a different filling: fudge, vanilla, caramel, or peanut butter. There are different sections to it that all have a distinct flavor, but it's still one candy bar. **Vanguard** is the same way, just not quite as tasty or full of empty calories. I first saw **Vanguard** neither in the arcade, nor on a home system, but in Atari's commercial for the 2600 game. You know the one. There was an announcer asking a group of guys about the game, specifically, which guy specializes in which "zone." Each of these bozos explained which zone they played through, and finally, the announcer asked the question that I still remember to this day. "But fellas, who destroys the Gond?" To which they responded in unison, "Luther destroys the Gond." Cut to really-big-football-player-type-dopey-guy blasting the Gond and laughing in a really-big-football-player-type-dopey-guy way.

Shortly after seeing that commercial, I picked up the 2600 cart. I had never seen the actual arcade machine until several years later, when I happened upon it at one of those highway rest stop "information" buildings that are still decorated in mid seventies browns, oranges, and occasionally, those daring tans. "Wow, this game looks much better than the VCS version!"

So, let's discuss the arcade **Vanguard** here, 'kay? Man, this game is great! Drop in your quarter. Press start. What's that? Voice? What's it saying? "Bon voyage." In order to really appreciate the voice in this game, imagine the most mechanical, flat, forced computer voice you ever heard, and make it just slightly above the barely comprehensible level. You're off, and you're piloting a spaceship that has the unique ability to fire in four directions. Each direction is indicated by a corresponding fire button, and,

Element	Dave	Joe	
Graphics	6	6	
Sound	8	7	
Gameplay	8	6	
Overall	8	6	

multi player same time		data save features
decent game ending		hidden stuff
variable skill levels		non-linear gameplay

yes, you can press all four at once to fire in all four directions simultaneously. You also have the ability to energize your craft (computer says, "let's attack!") by flying over the energy pods that sometimes drift by. While you are invincible, a little victory tune plays and the enemies change color, a la **Pac-Man** eating a power pill, and when your power is about to wear off, "be careful!"

Vanguard is comprised of several different "zones," and each zone's name is announced upon entering that particular zone. The first unnamed zone involves a scrolling screen of the left to right variety filled with



The arcade version of Vanguard... you have to respect the 5200 version!

two kinds of enemies, Mists and Harleys. These Harleys are not of the motorcycle or hot Batman villain-babe variety, but look more like the ship in **Defender/Stargate**.

"Rainbow zone." (Use that computer voice you imagined each time we start a new zone. Fun, huh?) Here, the screen scrolls by diagonally while white circles, Helms and Ammos, attempt to bombard your ship. Why this zone is called the Rainbow zone is beyond me, since it is probably the single most colorless zone in the game. Maybe "Diagonal," "Colorless," or "White Circle" zone would have been better. How about "Diagonal Colorless White Circle Zone"?

"Styx Zone." While this left to right zone is sadly devoid of Dennis DeYoung and Tommy Shaw, and instead contains more Mists and Harleys, feel free to hum a few bars of "Too Much Time on My Hands" while playing through it. Another Rainbow zone follows the Styx zone.

"Stripe Zone." Yet another left to right scroller which is the best of the three in the game, and is inhabited by Bases I, II, III, Garime and Barime. Still another trip through the Rainbow zone follows the Stripe zone.

"Bleak Zone." This top down scrolling zone is easily my favorite in the game. Here, we're first attacked by laughing snakes, "Kemlus," that can be either zapped or docked with. Docking (computer scolds Kemlus, "Keep quiet!") yields more points than zapping, but after docking three times, your ship will be destroyed by these cackling space reptiles. After the Kemlus bombardment, Romeda attack your craft.

"Last Zone," is merely a shrinking room where the Gond lies in wait. The bottom wall moves ever closer to the top as you jockey for prime attack position, but a little practice will find you blasting Gond back to wherever it is he came from, and you'll be off on your way through the second maze.

Vanguard is a superb shooter with great sound, a variety of enemy attacks and a very interesting color scheme. The 5200 version is an excellent port of the arcade sleeper, and the 2600 version, while still very good, loses the urgency and the detailed backdrops of the original. It feels a bit too sluggish, like piloting the **River Raid** jet through a molasses filled sky. Molasses reminds me of sugar, which reminds me of candy, which reminds me that I could really go for a SkyBar right about now, and, hey! Speaking of SkyBars, maybe I'll go plug another quarter into **Vanguard** while I'm at it!

SOUKYUGURENTAI

rAnDoM
ReVieWs

Saturn/Playstation

EA Japan

Shooter



Only Keita Iida
can pronounce
this one, so he gets
to review it!

Element	Keita	Joe	
Graphics	7		
Sound	7		
Gameplay	8		
Overall	8		

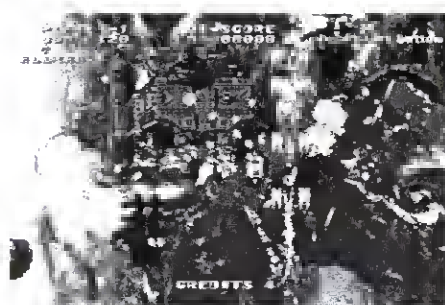
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<input type="checkbox"/>	decent game ending	<input type="checkbox"/>	hidden stuff
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While hardcore shooter fans in the U.S. have been left out to dry as far as 32-bit gaming is concerned, the story is different in Japan, where the scrolling 2D shooter has enjoyed a mini-renaissance of sorts. **R-Types**, **Thunderforce V**, **Strikers 1945** and others have kept players happy while we've only seen a fraction of them reach our shores. **Soukyugurentai** is a perfect example of old school 2D gaming at its finest that offers nothing really new to the genre (but then again, how many shooters do?) but makes up for it with solid gameplay.

Soukyugurentai is a 2D vertical-scrolling shooter that has a little of **Raiden** here, and some **Galactic Attack** there. It's also sprite-based, so don't expect the gee-whiz look that's found in **Raystorm** or **Einhander**. Graphics do improve the further you get, however, with some creative new enemies and terrific backgrounds that use the Saturn's high resolution graphics and scaling capabilities to good use. Sound wise, it's also ho-hum and lacks any flair. You'll find huge end-level bosses and nicely animated ships, but that's standard-fare on shooters nowadays. The volume level seems to have been turned down a few notches, and the you won't find any booming explosions either. But you'll quickly get over these minor drawbacks when you recognize the game's strong points.

First of all, **Soukyugurentai** has analog support. The analog controls take a while to get used to, but the slightly awkward con-

trol becomes second nature after awhile - if not a revelation. If you don't like it, you can always opt for the standard digital controls. But it's in the gameplay department where **Soukyugurentai** really shines. You have a choice between three different ships - each with widely differing attributes - before the game. Depending on your decision, your approach to playing will differ dramatically. The red ship is fast and is equipped with a lock-on, homing missile that does a load of damage if you can hang on long enough to



Beautiful but deadly.

unleash its power. Choose the blue guy and you're treated to heat-seeking missiles, in addition to the standard shot. Or, you can go balls out and take the slow but powerful green ship. You'll have to contend with hordes of enemies coming at you from everywhere (even from behind) and an almost blinding amount of missiles and lasers coming at you from all angles.

Yeah, but it still sounds like any other

shooter, right? Well, in the case of shooters (more so than others), the difference between a mediocre and great game is really a fine line. And **Soukyugurentai** steps over to the positive side with its mix of near-perfect controls and intense action. And did I mention that it was HARD? If you thought **Galactic Attack** was a ball breaker, wait until you try **Soukyu**! The difficulty really took me by surprise, because the game starts off easy, with a few nondescript ships wandering onscreen to be shot at.

Snick. Enjoy this tranquil moment while it lasts, and practice your web weapons, because total and utter mayhem breaks loose after level four. You've been warned.

Soukyugurentai is available on both PlayStation and Saturn, but as is the case with most 2D shooters (and fighters, for that matter), **Soukyu** is better on the Sega machine, but not by much. The PlayStation version has dual shock support, and the vibrations coming out of the controller when you get hit or are near an explosion really makes you feel like you're "in the game." Nifty feature for sure, but it's not enough to compensate for some slight slowdown and loss of animation.

Overall, **Soukyu** is up there among the top 32-bit shooters such as **Galactic Attack**, **Strikers 1945** and **Raiden DX**. It's not going to win any beauty contests, but what it does well in areas where it matters. And you know what those are.

DEMON ATTACK

Imagic, for Atari 2600

I know that some of you will shoot me for this, but I'm not much a fan of the stationary, slide-and-shoot **Space Invaders/Galaxian**-type genre. Save, perhaps, for **Galaga**, **Phoenix** and **Gaplus**. I know that all shooters in general are repetitive in nature (which isn't necessarily a bad thing, mind you), but they're just TOO boring, and most of the clones are extremely derivative, more so than knockoffs of other types of games. However, I'll give credit where credit is due, because **Demon Attack** is one of the best of its kind and Rob Fulop put some effort in differentiating this game from its forebears.

This game successfully combines tried-and-true formulas that were successful in other early shooters and ups the ante with brilliant graphics. Each of the enemies are beautifully drawn and consist of multiple vibrant colors. As you progress in the game, you'll encounter different enemies with slightly different characteristics that slightly alter the strategy somewhat. For example, birds which earlier took only one shot to kill now split into two smaller birds when they're first hit, and each of the tiny ones then must be disposed of separately. This is somewhat reminiscent of **Phoenix**. In addition, the sheer number of enemies is mind-boggling. You can be playing **Demon Attack** for hours and you still might not have seen all the different foes that the game has to offer!

All in all, however, it's still the same 'ol same 'ol, but one can't help but appreciate the care and effort put into this game. It doesn't break any new ground, but if god is in the details, **Demon Attack** could very well have become a religion all its own. — Keita Iida



Aero Blasters

Hudson, for NEC PC Engine

While I admit that I'm as much of a fan of games featuring fancy weapon systems as the next guy. I mean, it's a heck of a lot of fun being able to wipe out legions of attacking aliens in twenty different ways. However, I don't believe it's the end-all criteria that determines a game's appeal. After all, if that were really the case, we wouldn't be enjoying **River Raid** or **Galaga** to this day, right? In fact, it's probably better to be a balanced (and fair) game that has a standard straight-firing shot and which requires skill to conquer than a game with a zillion different power-ups which makes for uneven gameplay.

That being said, there's something refreshing about **Aero Blasters**, something that reminds us of the wonderful and pure simplicity of classics such as **1941** and **Sidearms**. While you do have some side weapons, they're not easy to obtain and they're not too useful anyway. No powering up to silly levels, no charging up for a stronger fire, none of that. Most of the time it's just you and your aircraft's basic missile going up against the opposition. And since you can only basi-

cally fire in a straight line, you're faced with the necessity of having to meet the enemies head-on and in the line of their fire as well. And man, there are bullets flying everywhere! It's tough on stage one and it only gets more challenging as you progress in the game. The speed in **Aero Blasters** ranges from super fast to nauseating without a hint of slowdown anywhere, even with a bucket full of cannons flying around on-screen.

Aero Blasters not only plays well, it looks great too. Graphics are exemplary. The full 256 palette of the PC Engine is utilized, and it shows in the beautiful scenery and sharp ship designs. The weapons aren't too flashy, and that's the only area where the visuals take a slight dip. Audio is weak, though. The sound of explosions are lame and the tunes aren't hardcore enough to get one's blood boiling.

Players who are attached to shooters that require grabbing scads of power-ups and blasting everything in sight (**Space Megaforce**, **Radiant Silvergun**) might have a tough time adjusting to such a simple shooter. This game is a rarity in the modern shooter era that emphasizes pure technique and quick reflexes over anything else. And trust me... in this case, it's a great thing!

Note: **Aero Blasters** can also be found on the Mega Drive as **Air Buster**, but it's not nearly as good as the PC Engine original. — Keita Iida



DEZAREMON

Athena, For Super Famicom

Do you have the creativity of da Vinci and the programmer's mentality of, say, Jarvis? Shooter fans craving for the equivalent of **Pinball Construction Set** need look no further. **Dezaemon** lets you design your own 2D vertical scrolling shooter. Using a nifty little editing tool, you can alter a wide range of variables such as your ship, the levels, enemies and even the music. You also get to decide the placement and the behavior of your foes. No more staring at static screens of your finished work (a-la **Mario Paint**) in this one. It's quite a feeling to be able to interact with your creation!

Using a plethora of easy-to-use menus and simple creation tools, players are free to design their own 2D shooting game. Want to attack a flying **Pac-Man** with some deadly popcorn? No problem. **Dezaemon** enables you to create your own space ships, enemies (and their behavior), backgrounds, structures — even the music — and put it all together in a shooter in the style of **Raiden Trad**. Composing the music is by far the best part and is not unlike **Mario Paint**'s. It's basically like making sheet music by hand in that you select notes and place them on the staff for the desired tone, then choose the instrument for each note. It's not as repetitive as you may expect, either, thanks to the copy/paste feature.

Playability falls somewhat short of the actual game-building process. It's no slouch and offers good controls and fairly intense gameplay. Several games are already on the cart, although it's not of the type of quality that'll make you buy it for the games alone. The

graphics won't remind you of *Axelay*, to say the least, with no scaling and rotation found anywhere in the game. Sound quality, on the other hand, is in stereo and more than holds its own against the average SNES title. Sound effects themselves are tinny and will remind you of the 8-bit days, however.

Your enjoyment (or lack of it) will largely depend on your interest in tinkering with game design, because the average player who lacks creativity or otherwise has no patience will want to avoid *Dezaemon*. Playstation and Saturn fans can also sink their teeth into *Dezaemon* because it was recently brought out as *Dezaemon Plus* for the both machines. It's nothing more than a (very slightly) enhanced port of this one, but it has the added benefit of allowing you to save your work on a memory card. A big plus. Also be on the lookout for *Dezaemon 3D* for the Nintendo 64, which is slated for release in Japan in early '99 and looks to be a souped-up version with presentation that's similar to *Raystorm*. — Keita Iida



Parsec

Texas Instruments, for TI-99/4A

When Joe asked us staffers to do find a shooter we knew and could review readily, I suggested PARSEC - a game for the TI-99/4A computer. Upon further investigation, I was informed that there have not been ANY TI games reviewed in the pages of the Digital Press. Therefore, I feel honored to be the first and hope to carry on the TI tradition in upcoming issues.

PARSEC is a horizontal shooter which contains 7 specific waves of per level of relentless enemy onslaught. No fancy ship configurations to deal with, just a simple laser with the ability to rapid fire. Rapid fire, which is essential to all good shooters, usually has its drawbacks. In PARSEC, if you are firing fast, your ship starts to flash red and if you continue without stopping..... BOOM! Another thing most shooters share is the 'patterns' they attack with are predictable and the game simply becomes an exercise of memory and placement. Then again, name me a shooter that doesn't?

Despite this annoyance, the game is quite playable. Variable lift speeds (1-3 selectable through keyboard) is handy as certain waves of enemies are actually easier to deal with at slower lift. (Gamers note: Use LIFT 1 for refueling in the tunnel. You'll be glad you did.) Other features include a per level scoring system (100 on level 1- 200 on level 2) and also features a fuel gauge. When you come to be low on fuel, a refueling tunnel will appear which you must traverse in order to refuel and continue your quest without bodily harm. After you have defeated all the waves of aliens, you need avoid an asteroid belt in which you must blast your way to the next level. Difficulty, on the other hand, pretty much tops out after level 3, where 3 hits are needed to take out all aliens. After that, if your good enough, it's a point fest!

A great plus to this game is when the Speech Synthesizer is used with this game - PARSEC becomes alive,

warning you of level changes, approaching alien craft attacks and when refueling is needed. Also, friendly congratulations are spoken if you get a "good shot" or have your "laser on target" resulting in a successful kill. If you have a TI Computer and plan to get this game, get the Speech Synthesizer. It'll make for a much more enjoyable gaming experience. — Scott Stone



KEN GRIFFEY JR.'S MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL

Nintendo, for N64

Nintendo's marketing and advertising crew deserves four stars and a gold medal. Their carefully crafted TV commercials create an astonishing illusion to make this shitty videogame look fun. Don't be fooled. This latest installment in the Griffey series is yet another flop in the amazingly uneven library of N-64 games.

I struggle to think of anything positive to say about this clunker. The unimpressive graphics are blown away by other baseball offerings for the N-64. The gameplay is so-so at best. The game lacks basic features like create-a-player and even instant replay. The bland announcer adds nothing in the way of excitement with his shockingly limited commentary, and the AI would make you think this was programmed by the producers of *Dumb and Dumber*. Tie game, bottom of the ninth. Runners on first and second, one out. You crack a sharp grounder directly to the second baseman. He throws the ball to third instead of going for the double play! This sort of thing was intolerable five years ago. Was this game play-tested? Whiff a batter on a 40 mph change-up, and Griffey's voice will suddenly chime in with some insipid comment about the pitcher's unhittable fastball. When the computer's starting pitcher grows tired he responds by taking more time—lots more time—to deliver a pitch. You'll find yourself screaming at him to throw the goddamn ball and wondering why any moron (no doubt in a ridiculous effort to inject "realism") would add this painful slow-down feature to the game.

Griffey baseball does incorporate some cool new camera angles and offers a choice of cursor controlled or standard "arcade style" hitting, an option that should be included in all future baseball games, but if you're looking for the next leap forward in sports programming, you're going to have to look elsewhere. This game has a rushed-to-market, "first effort on a new console" feel to it, which is amazing when you consider that they delayed its release for something like a year. I rated this game a 4 not because there is no fun to be had (it's at least playable, in spite of the flaws) but to warn you not to buy it. You'll have much more fun with any of the highly rated baseball games for the Saturn or Playstation; more importantly, Acclaim's *All-Star Baseball* for the N-64 greatly outshines the Griffey disappointment in every area.

A couple years back, Electronic Arts upset its fans by canceling the release of an impending football title, I think for the PSX. EA explained that the game simply wasn't up to snuff, and they were going back to the

Random reviews

drawing board. Nintendo should have shown a little integrity by doing the same thing with Griffey Baseball. Instead, Nintendo decided to rip off its loyal customer base, knowing full well that many people would buy this mediocre crap because of the Griffey name, the success of the two Griffey titles for the SNES and, especially, the fact that they would be the first to release a baseball title for the N-64. - Jeff Cooper



Tempest X3

Interplay, for Playstation

When **Tempest 2000** first hit the Jaguar, most players were awestruck by the awesome new additions and amazing visuals that finally screamed "Next Generation!" But for some reason, the (basically) same game was released without much fanfare when it arrived on Playstation, probably because the machine was already drowning with tons of choice titles. Atari fans also didn't go gaga over it, probably because they were in a state of denial that their beloved Jag game had lost its exclusivity. But being a fan of the classics and a game player first and foremost, I'm here to give you the scoop on a game that was heralded on the Jag and almost went unnoticed on the Playstation.

The game is basically **Tempest 2000** with souped-up graphics effects, plus a few extra enemies. The biggest change is in the visual department, where the webs are rendered with translucent, warping textures in the panels instead of the gourad shading of Jeff Minter's Jaguar creation. This makes **X3** even more psychedelic than even **Tempest 2000**. There's also a mild plasma around the edges of the screen that's subtle yet tastefully done. The explosions and various effects of the original have also been replaced by full polygonal effects which look extra trippy when combined with the overall scene that's rendered in a persistence/blur field. There are just as many different variety of webs in **X3**, although they're less angular and consequently a bit tamer in my opinion. The other major difference is with the audio as you'd expect, being as the sound is now on CD, allowing for a fantastic red-book audio version of the **Tempest 2000** soundtrack disc. Some of the audio effects have changed, and by and large they're improved upon its Jaguar predecessor.

Where **Tempest X3** stumbles somewhat is in the gameplay department, although I would point out that I'm a T2K "purist"... meaning that I played **Tempest 2000** to heck so some of the faults might not be evident if you haven't spent much time with the original. One of the terrific power-ups that was introduced in **Tempest 2000** was the AI Droid. It was a wire-framed, cube-shaped object that assisted you in blasting away enemies on the web. In **X3**, Interplay took the "I" out of AI! It seems to have lost its intelligence because it just follows you around and hovers over your ship without a mind of its own. This takes away from an important strategy element because it's basically useless - you can't take comfort anymore that

you have something covering your butt while you mind your own business circling the web... oh well. The hideous looking demonhead has been replaced by a smaller object that takes several shots to destroy, although this doesn't necessarily detract from the game and is probably just a matter of taste. And if you feared the dreaded Pulsars in **Tempest 2000** (I KNOW you did), there's no reason to get scared when they reach the top in **X3**. Here, instead of splitting in two when it reaches the top and literally hurtles its way toward you, they now behave like nothing more than the red flippers. It's a bit easier in dealing with Pulsars, but to an expert player, the feeling of terror and helplessness when confronted by Pulsars is something that will be missed.

Despite these caveats, however, the gameplay is just as fast and furious and fun as it ever was, and in many respects, it's improved. The slight experience of slow-down on **Tempest 2000** when a lot of enemies onscreen has thankfully been eliminated, and the textures on the web enhance what was already a trippy visual delight. And best of all, those who have Playstations and not Jaguars, and consequently missed out on the fun the first time around, can now find out what the fuss was all about... and enjoy some extra audiovisual treats to go along with it. And that's perhaps the best thing about **Tempest X3's** already long line of virtues. - Keita Iida



TWIN EAGLE

Taito, Arcade

In the late eighties, you couldn't turn around from the change/token machine without running into another shoot 'em up. Just picture today's arcades, replace all the fighting and driving games with shooters and you're on the trolley. One of the amusing entries in this arena was **Twin Eagle**.

The aptly named arcade favorite is the story of two eagle brothers whose girlfriend is kidnapped at the outset of the game and held hostage by a group of hawk-like thugs. Ed and Earl Eagle must punch, chop, kick, and decapitate their foes on the way to their final showdown with the vile Vulture...uhh, no. Wait a minute. Named because it had the entertaining advantage of allowing two player simultaneous play, **Twin Eagle** is for the most part your standard shooter. You guide a helicopter capable of shooting or bombing objects that fly or scroll by in the vertical, top to bottom fashion, and if your game ends, simply insert another quarter to keep going. Every so often, power-ups appear, and grabbing them adds an extra bomb to your reserve, speeds up your copter, or juices up your firepower.

The graphics in **Twin Eagle** are above average, although not quite spectacular. The gameplay is pretty standard, ie, reduce everything to cinders. Why then, are we discussing **Twin Eagle**? Well, here's why.

It's the first "aircraft flying over stuff" game I remember playing where everything on the screen was fair game for your itchy trigger finger. Buildings, trees, hapless soldiers without tanks or any sort of armor, who cares? Blast 'em all into oblivion! When you blow up

the larger stuff, you're rewarded with enough fire and brimstone to choke Mephisto himself, and unleashing a bomb shakes the screen as well as your eardrums. Also, and probably the single most memorable thing about the game is that it plays a really loud, quasi rock tune during the "bonus" rounds. After flying over a certain amount of terrain, your whirlybird speeds up to mach five and engages enemy planes while a song with the following lyrics blares from the speakers: "A WAH, A WAH, A WAH, GONNA BOMB A TOWWWWWN..." Well, that was as near as we could figure anyway.

If you can track this game down at a highway rest stop, local pizza joint, or sleazy laundromat, drop a quarter in and play through until you get to that point. You won't be disappointed. It really is very entertaining in that "bomb them back to the stone age" way.

NOTE: A version of this fun coin-op shooter was produced for the NES, but it retains nothing that made the upright enjoyable. Stay away from it unless you're overly curious or tired of the countless good shooters available for the N-8. — Dave Giarrusso

PHELIOS

Namco, for Sega Genesis

I originally bought **Phelios** about a year ago because it happened to meet two important purchasing criteria: A) it was a Namco game, and B) it was cheap. While the second criterion would have probably been sufficient to justify the purchase, the first certainly didn't hurt.

"The gods are at war!" As Apollo, the sun deity, (Namco gets points for using the word "deity" here) you must rescue Artemis, goddess of the moon and all around hot babe. Apollo is "stupendously angry, as only a mighty god can be!... He grasps his sword of light and leaps on Pegasus..."

"She's been taken by Typhon," who, incidentally is the ruler of the darkness. Artemis informs Apollo that he will face "horrendous wretches... But you must come!" It really does say that. Apollo must use his "sword of light" to defeat the nasty nellies and ultimately rescue Artemis, if you're up to the task.

Any game that can manage to slip in that much sexually tilted innuendo not only in the instruction book, but also right there on the back of the package is already on the fast track to becoming a huge favorite of mine. This game not only is a fantastic shoot 'em up, it's loaded with tons of eye candy, wacky mythological creatures, and all kinds of neat touches that fall into the category of "cool stuff we've always wanted to see in a video game."

You get to traverse the top to bottom, and slightly side to side, scrolling terrain not in a jet, 'copter, spaceship, or flying VW bus, but rather, on the back of Pegasus, the legendary winged horsie. Cool! You don't have machine guns or bombs, but you do have your groovy sword of light which, will send out quick bursts of light (less damaging - quick tap of button) or more powerful bursts (booya! - hold button down longer) Cool! **Phelios** manages to successfully alter the standard shooter with its themes of mythology, and gives us a wonderful gaming experience in the bargain. Really cool!

You know the drill by now. Fly around, shoot a bunch of evil stuff, gather the power ups, fight a boss, watch a cinema scene, then keep moving forward. Here, at many of the cinemas, we're treated to a really nice view of Artemis' heaving bosom as she waits for us to rescue her. She speaks to us in a slightly above average Genesis digitized voice, and if that's not enough to get you to grab this cart, hell, we've got Medusa, dragons, skeletons, disembodied heads, phantasms, and all sorts of neat creatures. Hey, as far as I'm concerned, any game that includes villains who attack by throwing their own heads at you is AOK, and we've got 'em here. After having played it, I would have bought it even if it wasn't buried at the bottom of the bargain bin. Get your copy today! — Dave Giarrusso

Star Soldier: Vanishing Earth

Hudson, for N64

What is it that makes a space shooter great? I'll answer that for ya. Besides the usual graphics, sound, gameplay, etc. it is that MOMENT when you've successfully navigated through a level and have accumulated the maximum power-up level, and are ready to challenge the boss.

The "soldier" series from Hudson is an 8/16-bit classic tale: **Star Soldier** (NES), **Super Star Soldier**, and **Soldier Blade** (both TG-16 games) are arguably the defining titles of the shooter era, which to me was 1986-1991. But when Hudson put together their 1998 "update" for the classic series, they left out not only the important elements that make ANY game fun, they also removed the single most important element to shooters: there are none of those power-up high MOMENTS here. In fact, you could almost say the power-up system doesn't even exist. You start with one of three ships, each of which has its own weapons. You can increase the firepower of each ship as a level progresses, but to tell the truth, you'll hardly notice the difference between level two, three, and four... and the super weapons have just one level of power. You can't change ships mid-way through the game, and you can't switch weapons.

If the level design and bosses were outstanding enough to draw attention away from this fact, I might have scored the game higher. But they're not. They're pretty dull, actually. The bosses have dramatic 3D introductions but the battles are pretty bland. The overall gameplay itself reminds me of the Sega CD title **Silpheed**, with its "fake" 3D backgrounds and real 2D action. That was a novelty at the time, and does nothing to help this game. The game is also way too short and too easy, and that's very unlike the "soldier" series. On the positive side, the music and voices are excellent. There are also hidden forks in the road, if you will, that lead to alternate areas of several of the levels. Let's just pretend this never happened. — Joe Santulli

Randoom reviews



LITE



The Rick Levine Interview

By Al Backiel

Digital Press was able to link up with former Imagic programmer Rick Levine on the Internet. He thanked us for our rather complimentary review of *Microsurgeon* for Intellivision. Hey, no problem! We tell it like it is! Rick was also kind enough to grant us an exclusive interview. We think our readers will enjoy hearing about what he has to say about the early days right up to the present. Today, Rick is a Systems Design Engineer at Microsoft working on the Windows 98 project.

AL: First off, how did you get started in data processing?

LEVINE: I majored in Mathematics at UCLA and used a slide rule in college Physics and Chemistry. I used keypunch cards to program in Fortran, and didn't really get hooked on computers until personal computing took off. While I was teaching mathematics at a high school in 1977, I decided to try incorporating computers into my lessons. I had a Sol-20 (8080 processor) computer at home and programmed it to help me run a simulation game in class. A fellow Psychology teacher let me use the computer simulation to teach students about the dangers and effects of different kinds of stress. It was very successful and I had a great time. I also wrote my first assembly language program: a chess playing computer in 4k of ram. Eventually, I decided to go back to college and get another degree in Computer Science. I'm very glad I did!

AL: How did you wind up working for Imagic?

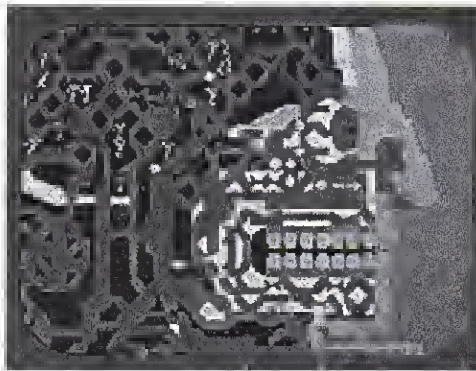
LEVINE: While back in college, I needed to support myself. I heard Mattel Electronics was making games, and I sent them a letter. I was very excited to get a job and began work on Mattel Electronics' Bowling handheld game. The game knew how to score bowling, control the inputs and outputs, play sounds; all in 1k of ram! Mike Minkoff, who later programmed *Astrosmash*, and I soon began work on PBA Bowling for Intellivision. The next year I took a job programming medical electronics, so I could be closer to school (UC Irvine) while I completed my Computer Science degree. Brian Dougherty, an acquaintance from Mattel, had moved to Northern California to start Imagic with some ex-Atari and ex-Mattel employees. He made me an offer I couldn't refuse!

AL: Were you there the same time as Rob Fulop and Dennis

Koble?

LEVINE: Yes. When I talked to Brian about working for Imagic, they were just beginning Intellivision development. However, I got to see *Demon Attack* and *Atlantis* for the Atari system and was very impressed. The entire staff of Imagic programmers was very sharp and fun to work with. Bob Smith's *Dragonfire* was another really fun Atari game I remember.

AL: Where did you get the idea for *Microsurgeon*? How long did it take to complete? Did you get any help? Were there any major hurdles? Are there any "Easter eggs" or "back doors" hidden in the game?



Levine's masterpiece, *Microsurgeon*
(Intellivision version pictured here) featured
voice in the TI-99/4a version!

LEVINE: When I worked on medical electronics, I was very fortunate to spend a day in an operating room watching Ophthalmologists (eye doctors) perform cataract surgeries. Before I went to work for Imagic, Brian and I discussed my idea of how fun it would be to play doctor in a game. It took me about 6 to 9 months to design and program *Microsurgeon*. I remember going to the library and collecting a dozen books on Anatomy. My first few attempts at capturing the feeling of steering through the body were not successful. I was trying too hard to get the detail right and missed the big picture, which I think is a

problem for many of today's games. Once I realized I needed to store lots of data in order to present an interesting scrollable body on the screen, I had to spend time figuring out how to store all the graphics and code in a 4k cartridge. I came up with a scheme for repeating blocks of graphics (a form of compression), and the artist came up with a great drawing for me to work with. There is a special graphics block in one of the arteries or veins that has my name. (Ed. Note: look for "rick" in dark area below jaw).

AL: I could just see you performing your own microsurgery. Did it reach the point where you realized that "we have no more room, we'll have to cut out the pancreas and the pituitary gland" (Although I see you even have the spleen)?

LEVINE: We did have to leave out some organs to make the graphics more understandable and make the game play well.

AL: Did you get any fan mail along the lines of: "Thanks to you my son became interested in medicine and is now a doc-

tor" or "thanks to you, I gave up smoking"?

LEVINE: Shortly after Microsurgeon was released, I learned that a University's medical school students were using the game to teach public school students about anatomy and the dangers of heart disease. That was certainly one of the most enjoyable letters I received.

Over the years I have met a few engineers who said they enjoyed playing Microsurgeon and still have it at home.

AL: What about Truckin' ? The same questions. Idea? Time? Help? Problems? Eggs?

LEVINE: Once I moved to Los Gatos, California, to work at Imagic, I still liked to visit friends and family in Los Angeles. Anyone who has driven often from Northern to Southern California, knows that highway I-5 has lots and lots of trucks. I never forgot the trucks and especially the friendly truck drivers who toot their horn. Again, it took me about 6 to 9 months to design and program Truckin'. Although an artist did some touch up work on my graphics at the end, I actually did all the artwork for Truckin' as well as the game design and programming. Figuring out what highways to use and areas of the country was difficult, since I had limited space for graphics and storing the information for the map and game play. The game testers were VERY good at helping me to make the game play challenging. In the game, if you are driving in Northern California in the San Jose area, there's a hidden highway that goes to Imagic:ster Eggs"

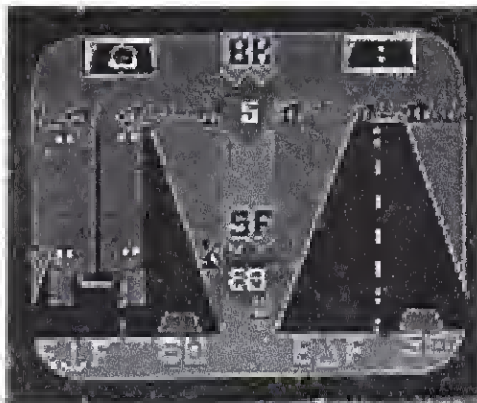
Basically you have to find the path to the old Imagic HQ in Los Gatos, Cal. If you have a Rand McNally road atlas it would help. I'm serious!. The route does not show up on the map in the instruction booklet. If you have a good road map, you will be able to trace the route. But if not, no problem. The following directions will suffice:

- From the title screen, Press 1 - 1 - 8 - 1. This takes the defaults and gives you a full tank of gas heading northbound out of San Diego. A no load, timed contest.
 - Accelerate, but stay below 24 MPH. (I know, this would be suicide on a real freeway! Not to mention the fingers you will get!). But, at this speed will be able to make the needed turns.
 - Make 1st left onto I-10 heading eastbound to LA.
 - Keep going east straight towards the coast. I-10 will end and you will automatically be turned north to Hollywood (HO) on US #01 (actually 101).
 - Stay due north thru Santa Cruz (SZ).
 - As soon as you approach San Jose (SJ), look for the 1st left. Turn here.
 - You are now on Route 9 eastbound. A little ways on this road and you've found it! The road will show the Imagic sign off into the horizon. The SJ city code will change into the programmer's initials RL (Rick Levine). Stop and take pictures if you like. It will stay there until you pass it. You can also see this coming from the opposite direction. That's a big 10-4, Good Buddy!
- In Game 1 above you only have to remember: Upper Fire= accelerate, Lower Fire = brake, Up=stay course, Down= U-turn, L/ R= drift left/right, 1=road, 8=gas up, 9=rest, 0=horn. Other tips:

stay in right lane. Oncoming trucks will try to hit you head on. Swerve to your left at the last possible second to avoid collisions. If you have a truck blocking you, use your horn. He'll get out of your way. If you can't go faster than 14 MPH, you need a rest. If you run out of gas, wait past midnight for a partial refill.

AL: I'd like to get technical for a minute. What programming language did you use for games for Intellivision? Were they 8K or 16K ? What hardware and what software was used in development?

LEVINE: All Intellivision programming was done in Assembly Language for the GI1600, a 16bit processor. Since the processor was not very fast by today's standards, and code space was limited, Assembly Language made the most sense. We used our own custom-built debug hardware for downloading code and testing it on the Intellivision system. While designing Microsurgeon, I built an editing program for the artists to use specifically for Intellivision graphics. It was used by the artists for many of the Imagic Intellivision games.



You have to be patient to enjoy the subtle strategy elements of Levine's Truckin'

AL: Did you write any other games for the dedicated game systems? What was your contribution to the Sega CD? Were you working for Sega at the time?

LEVINE: While working for Digital Pictures a few years ago, I programmed an interactive "video" game "Kids on Site" for the Sega CD. Young children had lots of fun operating on-screen construction equipment while interacting with funny human characters. I also ported "Double Switch", a successful Digital Pictures Sega CD game, to Windows '95 using the first release of Microsoft's Games SDK.

AL: I understand you also wrote programmed or designed games for the TI99/4a, Apple IIs, Amiga, and Atari ST. I don't happen to own any of those systems, but I'm sure some of our readers do. What games were done for those systems and what were they like?

LEVINE: The TI99/4a was fun to work on. I was able to add speech synthesis to Microsurgeon (I think it was something like "Paging Dr. Levine, Paging Dr. Levine") and the graphics run in a higher resolution.

I programmed Mac tools for authoring the content for "It Came From the Desert" on the Amiga. I worked on several contract jobs for the Apple IIs and Atari ST, but did not program games for them.

AL: What's it like at Microsoft?

LEVINE: Microsoft is a great place to work. There are lots of very smart people and an unbelievable variety of interesting products in development.

AL: It sounds like you have had a lot of interesting experiences and really enjoy your work. Thanks for chatting with us and good luck to you!

ROMpage!

featuring
Sean Kelly

Report: World of Atari '98 and Other Weirdness

So maybe we're a little late in offering a World of Atari report, but we took a little time off from the fanzine to finish-up the latest Collector's Guide. At any rate, we thought our readers deserved a report from the Digital Press point of view...

Have you ever attended a collector's meeting in your area? There are several groups of collectors across the country that get together on a regular or irregular basis. If you've been to such a meeting, multiply that by about 20, add-in some vendors, a live auction, and put yourself in Las Vegas and you have World of Atari. If you've never been to a collector's meeting lemme do my best to describe what you missed.

Picture a large conference room with tables or "aisles" running up and down. On both sides of each of the three aisles were vendors selling anything and everything from games to memorabilia to t-shirts. Some booths were larger than others and some booths were more "professional" than others. Some were selling stuff and a couple were just showing off stuff. There was even a booth that did nothing but sell raffle tickets with the grand prize being a cocktail arcade Asteroids machine and all proceeds going to the local Salvation Army. Vendors ranged from the "seasoned veterans" such as Best Electronics and B&C Computervisions to the group of "kids" with boxes and boxes of stuff they had found at thrift stores and the like.

Scattered along the sides of the room were arcade machines. While I didn't walk around counting them, there were probably 15-20 machines. They were all classic machines with some being more classic than others as the very first arcade game made was there - **Computer Space**. There was also an original **Pong** machine.

Across the hall from the main conference room was a smaller room that was used for the various keynote speeches that were held throughout both days. The likes of Rob Fulop, Arnie Katz, Don Thomas, among many others, were giving half-hour speeches all day long. This room was also used for the "swap-meet" that was held after hours on Friday in which anyone that cared to could setup shop and offer items for trade or sale.

Down the hall from the main and keynote rooms was the museum room. The museum room was something of a history of video-games display with an emphasis placed on items that were never released. The vast majority of what was on display in the museum room were items likely never seen before by most collectors. Items such as the Atari CX-2000 system, the Atari Graduate Computer add-on, the original model of the 5200 trackball, the Atari Cosmos handheld system, and I could go on for hours...

There were several aspects of the show that I enjoyed thoroughly. The keynote speeches were great, the museum was a hell of an

experience, but the most interesting thing about the show was all the people! Putting faces to the likes of Leonard Herman, Lee Krueger, Steve Bender, etc. etc. etc. was AWESOME! I've dealt with these people for years and years and had never met the vast majority of them before. World of Atari allowed me to hang-out and just plain bullshit with these folks! Nowhere else could I find such a large group of people interested in the same things I am. Naturally some of them would have been better left "un-met", but 99% of them were fun to hang with.

The auction was pretty much of a joke. Most of the items on the auction block were put there by folks that were a lot more proud of what they had than the buyers felt they should be. The room literally broke-out in laughter at some of the starting bids. Hopefully that will send a message to these folks when they think about putting items up for bid at next year's show! On the contrary, items up for auction with respectable starting bids generally fetched the "going rate". A perfect example of this is the Vectrex I put up for auction. I had brought the system just to be on display for people to play and check out but I had no desire to lug it back home with me so I put it up for auction. I put a low reserve of \$40 on it figuring that if nobody was willing to pay that much, I'd take it back home. The winning bidder got the system for \$105 which is about what the system goes for these days. So I was happy and the buyer got it for a fair price.

One thing that completely bugged me about the show didn't even happen there, but rather before the show. Grumbings about commercialization or this guy or that guy involved in putting the show together was on an ego-trip or was an asshole or whatever else could be found in the newsgroups for weeks prior to the show. Some of what was said I may have agreed with and some I found to be completely ridiculous. My answer to the problems or reservations had to be "so what"! So what if there were t-shirts and caps and whatever else sold with a World of Atari logo on it? So what if this one or that one is an asshole? So what if the show could have been promoted differently or even better? I went to the show to have a good time and that I had - big-time! I couldn't care less who was running it or what was for sale or whatever else. I went and got to hang-out with a lot of very cool people, saw some very cool stuff, picked up a couple items I needed for my collection at decent prices, and passed on a few I thought were too expensive. What else could anyone ask for in something like this???

Plans for next year's show are well underway and very preliminary info puts it back in Vegas again at roughly the same time of year - the middle of august. The show got very good reviews elsewhere and attendance is expected to be at least double that of last year with more "big-name" sponsorship. I would hope that everyone reading this at least make an effort to attend. If you have vacation time or personal days coming, set aside some for the show. If any of the grumbling had an effect on your decision to not attend last

year, give it a shot this year and judge the show for yourself on it's own merits...

The "Other Weirdness" Part

Recently I've been receiving letters from a collector interested in getting some games from me. I thought I'd share some excerpts from one of them here. While the person that wrote this letter (who shall remain nameless) may not be the norm, he's certainly not the only one myself and others have heard from in this fashion. As you read this, keep in mind that I'm NOT MAKING THIS UP - this is an actual letter!

(begin quote)

MY NAME IS "COLLECTOR X" AND YOU HAD SENT ME SOME INFORMATION ON THE ATARI COMMERCIALS ON VHS TAPE. YOU HAD DESCRIBE THAT YOU STILL HAVE THE VIDEO GAME CARTIDGES WHICH IS BACHELOR PARTY AND GIG-LO TWO FOR \$75 PLUS THE ATARI COMMERCIALS FOR \$23 WHICH INCLUDES SHIPPING AND HANDLELING. ON THURSDAY OCTOBER 8, 1998 I HAVE MADE OUT A CHECK FOR \$98 PAYABLE ONLY TO YOU AND I SENT THIS FOR FIRST CLASS MAIL. I WANTED TO BE SURE THAT I WANTED TO CONFIRM THAT YOU DID RECEIVE MY CHECK IN THE MAIL? IF YOU DID YOU NEED TO CALL ME AND TELL ME WHEN YOU ARE GOING TO SHIP ME MY PACKAGE OF THE TWO VIDEO GAME CARTIDGES FOR ATARI 2600 PLIS THE VHS TAPE OF THE ATARI COMMERCIALS? WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO SEND MY MY VIDEO GAMES CARTIDGES WITH THE VHS TAPE OF THE ATARI COMMERCIALS? I NEED TO ALSO CONFIRM THAT YOU HAVE RECEIVE THE CHECK FOR NINTY EIGHT DOLLARS EVEN. THE CHECK IS GOOD. BUT IF YOU HAVE CASH THE CHECK ALREADY THAN YOU WILL HAVE TO GOAHEAD AND SEND ME MY PACKAGE OF THE TWO VIDEO GAME CARTIDGES TO ME FOR PRIORITY MAIL THROUGH THE POST OFFICE. YOU NEED TO GO AHEAD AND CONFIRM WITH ME ON THE TWO VIDEO GAME CARTIDGES PLUS THE VHS TAPE FIRST CLASS MAIL AND SEND THE PACKAGE AS FAST AND AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE!

(This letter was received a whole four days after his check just so you know. I'm skipping a little rambling on about the same thing here but a little later, he goes into the following)

ALSO I HAVE BEEN HAVING TROUBLE IN SOME A PERSON HAD CLAIM THAT THE PERSON CLAIM THAT THEY HAVE WORK FOR A BANK OF CITY BANK TELLING ME SOMETHING TO DO WITH A CREDIT CARD OR SOMEONE TRYING TO GET ME TO SUBSCRIBE TO A CREDIT CARD AND I TOLD THE PERSON JULIE NO I DONOT WANT TO SUBSCRIBE TO A CREDIT CARD. I TOLD HER NO. SHE WAS CLAIMING THAT I HAD CHARGE ON MY CREDIT CARD BUT I NEVER DID DO SUCH A THING! SHE CLAIM SHE WAS WORKING FOR A CITY BANK OF IOWA, ILLINOIS AND THERE IS REALLY NO SUCH PLACE. THAN A GUY HAD ALSO CALLED FROM THE SAME PLACE OF CITYBANK OF ILLINOIS! IT SOUNDS SUSPIOUS TO ME BECAUSE I NEVER DID CHARGE ANY VIDEO GAMES ON MY CREDIT CARD! SHE CALL AGAIN ON SUN AND LAST WEEK! I HOPE MY CHECK DIDN'T GET LOST! BECAUSE IF IT DID THAN THERE IS SOMETHING WRONG! WHEN I ASK A QUESTION ASKING ABOUT WELL HOW DID YOU GET MY NAME AND TELEPHONE NUMBER AND I TOLD HER I DIDNOT CHARGE ANYTHING ON A CREDIT CARD. I TOLD HER TO REMOVE MY

NAME BUT SHE KEPT ON BUGGING ME! I WONDER IF SHE TOOK MY CHECK AND CASH IT WHICH WASNOT AUTHORISE UNLESS IF SHE KEPT THE MONEY! BUT SHE COULD NOT HAVE CASH IT BECAUSE IT WAS IN YOUR NAME! THE GIRL TOLD ME IT TAKES SEVEN TO EIGHT WEEKS TO TAKE THE NAME OFF THE LIST BUT IT REALLY DOESNOT TAKE THAT LONG. BUT YOU SEE THIS SALES PERSON MAY HAD FOUND THE CHECK AND CASH IT FOR HERSELF AND I DON'T KNOW IF YOU HAVE RECEIVE MY CHECK THROUGH THE MAIL. THAT IS WHY I NEED YOUR HELP?

(OK time for a break before we all get stupid - end quote!)

Can someone tell me WHAT IN THE HELL THIS PERSON IS TALKING ABOUT?!?! It seems to me that some telemarketer had called his house a few times and apparently he's under the impression they can also intercept his mail somehow.

(Back to the fun - begin quote)

IF YOU HAVE RECEIVE MY CHECK THAN YOU NEED TO GOAHEAD AND SEND ME MY VIDEO GAMES CARTIDGES PLUS THE VHS TAPE OF THE ATARI COMMERCIALS! SEND IT FOR PRIORITY MAIL FOR FIRST CLASS MAIL AND SEND IT AS FAST AND AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE! IF I DONOT RECEIVE A RESPONSE FROM YOU THAN I NEED TO GOAHEAD AND CANCEL MY CHECK! I NEED TO EITHER CANCEL THE CHECK UNLESS IF YOU PROVIDE ME WITH THE VIDEO GAME CARTIDGES AND THE VHS TAPE I WOULD HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO CANCEL AND YOU WILL HAVE TO GOAHEAD AND SEND ME A FULL REFUND FOR THE PURCHASE PRICE OF \$98! I AM PAYING GOOD MONEY AND IT LOOKS LIKE I AM PAYING BIG MONEY FOR THIS! I AM PAYING BIG MONEY WHICH I AM PAYING GOOD HARD EARN MONEY WHICH I AM PAYING FOR THIS MERCHANDISE IT LOOKS LIKE YOU COULD GO AHEAD AND SEND ME THE MERCHANDISE TO ME FOR FIRST CLASS MAIL AND SEND IT AS FAST AND AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE! YOU NEED TO GOAHEAD AND DO TWO TO THREE THINGS FOR ME! NUMBER ONE I WOULD LIKE TO FIND OUT IF DID YOU RECEIVE MY CHECK? NUMBER 2 IF THE ANSWER IS YES. DID YOU CASH MY CHECK? IF THE ANSWER IS YES THAN YOU OWE ME MY MERCHANDISE TO ME! YOU NEED TO NUMBER 3 IF YOU HAVE ALREADY CASH THE GOOD CHECK THAN YOU NEED TO GOAHEAD AND SEND ME MY PACKAGE OF THE TWO VIDEO GAME CARTIDGES, ONE VHS TAPE OF THE ATARI COMMERCIALS! IF YOU WILL PLEASE SEND ME MY MERCHANDISE TO ME FOR FIRST CLASS MAIL. SEND ME THE PACKAGE RIGHT AWAY WHEN YOU RECEIVE THIS LETTER! NUMBER 4. IF I DONOT RECEIVE THE PACKAGE OF THE TWO VIDEO GAME CARTIDGE AND THE VHS TAPE THAN YOU NEED TO GO AHEAD AND SEND ME A COMPLETE REFUND CHECK FOR THE AMOUNT OF \$98 EVEN! EITHER AN UPDATED CHECK FOR ME TO BEABLE TO CASH AT THE BANK! BUT THE UPDATED CHECK SHOULD BE GOOD ENOUGH TO CLEAR THE BANK! IF FOR SOMEREASON IF THE UPDATED CHECK DOESNOT CLEAR THE BANK! THAN THE CHECK IS NO GOOD WHICH MEANS THAT THE UPDATED CHECK THAT THERE IS NOT ENOUGH SUFFICIENT FUNDS WHICH THE CHECK WOULD HAVE TO CLEAR THE BANK!

(end quote)

While reading this letter, in between rolling on the floor laughing my ass off and an Excedrin break in the middle of it, I started to wonder how in the hell someone like this can even survive? Some

of you are probably wondering if the guy is retarded - I honestly don't know but I don't think so. I did meet him at World of Atari. He seemed a bit strange but not retarded. He was also walking around with a huge bag full of stuff which says to me that he has to at least have a job. Imagine pulling up to the drive-thru and getting this:

"Welcome to Burger King. Would you like to try our Whopper Value Meal? It's a really good deal but the girl that makes the fries sometimes doesn't put enough fries into the box that holds the fries. I told her that she needs to put more fries in the box but she keeps calling me on the intercom and takes my paycheck. I don't think she can cash it but it is made out to me otherwise I would have to cancel it. Or she will have to give me my full paycheck or send it to me for deposit at the bank otherwise it better be a good check that I can cash at the bank! If the Whopper isn't good then she has to make another one. And a better one that is fresh and good! So would you like to try a Whopper value meal? Hello? Where have you gone with my car! It is green and it is my car! You are not authorize to take it! Hello?"

It's not really my intention to make fun of the guy here, but come on! How insane can one person be and still be allowed mingle with the rest of society?

(Well, back to our program - begin quote)

P.S. SO IF YOU CANNOT PROVIDE ME WITH THE TWO VIDEO GAME CARTRIDGES OF BACHELOR PARTY AND GIG-LO PLUS THE VHS TAPE OF ATARI COMMERCIALS! AND IF YOU CANNOT SEND THEM TOO ME THAN YOU NEED TO GOAHEAD AND SEND ME MY CHECK BACK TO ME IF YOU HAVENOT CASH IT LET THAN YOU NEED TO SEND THE CHECK BACK TO ME SO I CAN TEAR IT UP! BUT YOU MUST CALL ME AND TALK TO ME ABOUT WHY YOU HAVENOT SEND ME MY PACKAGE OF VIDEO GAMES AND THE VHS TAPE! LOOKS LIKE TO ME YOU CAN GOAHEAD AND SEND ME THE PACKAGE! BUT I HAVE TO RECEIVE SOMETHING FROM YOU SINCE I AM PAYING TO YOU YOU SHOULD GOAHEAD AND RESPOND TO MY LETTER! IT WOULD BE WISE FOR YOU TO GO AHEAD AND SEND ME THE TITLE I HAD REQUESTED! SO PLEASE SEND ME MY TWO VIDEO GAME CARTRIDGES PLUS THE VHS TAPE OF THE ATARI COMMERCIALS! SEND THEM FOR FIRST CLASS MAIL SEND IT AS FAST AND AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE! SEND ME MY VIDEO GAMES AND VHS TAPES AS FAST AS YOU CAN! SEND IT IMMEDIATELY WHEN YOU RECEIVE THIS LETTER! YOU NEED TO CALL ME AND TELL ME WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE? BUT I DO NEED TO RECEIVE INFORMATION FROM YOU! SO PLEASE RESPOND TO MY REQUEST!

DOUBLE P.S. YOU MUST RESPOND TO MY REQUEST! IF YOU DON'T RESPOND THAN I AM NOT GOING TO KNOW ANYTHING! IF THE PERSON INDEED HAVE CASH THE CHECK WITHOUT NOTIFYING ME AND IF THE GIRL HAD DONE THIS WITHOUT YOUR CONSENT THAN THAT WOULD BE CONSIDERING OF BEING MAIL FRAUD WHICH IS A SERIOUS OFFENSE! BUT THERE IS REALLY NO WAY FOR THE GIRL TO DO THIS UNLESS SHE GETS CAUGHT BY SECURITY! SO I REALLY NEED YOU TO GOAHEAD AND CHECK ON THIS! BUT IF YOU HAVE RECEIVE MY CHECK THAN YOU HAVE TO SEND ME MY VIDEO GAME CARTRIDGE! AND VHS TAPE! SEND IT AS FAST AND AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE! I AM COUNTING ON YOU! PLEASE RESPOND TO MY LETTER!

(end quote)

Well boys and girls, if I go on any further in quoting this letter you are at risk of being stupified so I'd better stop here. There were two more "PS's" and I'm sure you can figure out for yourself what he said in them. Be forewarned....next person that pisses me off I'm sending this guy your name, address and phone number and telling him that you called me and told me that you were planning on taking the mail out of his mailbox every day before he gets home from work. It will truly suck to be you!! :)

Shooters of DP Past

More shooter action? Dig out your back issues!

TITLE.....	SYSTEM	ISSUE	RATING	GENRE	AUTHOR
A.E.....	5200	dp34	5.5	Shooter	Villalpando
Alien Brigade.....	7800	dp19	8.5	Shooter	
Alien Vs. Predator.....	JAG	dp22	9.0	Shooter	
Astro Chase.....	5200	dp34	5.0	Shooter	lida
Atlantis.....	2600	dp35	6.0	Shooter	Backiel
Atlantis.....	ODY2	dp35	5.0	Shooter	Backiel
Atlantis.....	INTV	dp35	7.0	Shooter	Backiel
Bank Panic.....	SMS	dp33	8.0	Shooter	Dyer
Bank Panic.....	SMS	wrdp	cc	Shooter	
Battle Wheels.....	LYNX	dp13	8.0	Shooter	
Bedlam.....	VECT	dp12	7.0	Shooter	
Captain America.....	NES	dp05	6.0	Shooter	
Commander Keen.....	IBM	dp17	3.0	Shooter	
Cruise Missile.....	2600	dp26	1.0	Shooter	
Cybermorph.....	JAG	dp16	3.0	Shooter	
Desert Falcon.....	7800	dp04	cc	Shooter	
Dreadnaught Factor.....	5200	dp06	8.0	Shooter	
Dreadnaught Factor.....	5200	dp22	9.0	Shooter	Cooper
Earth Dies Screaming.....	2600	dp07	4.7	Shooter	
Fatal Run.....	2600	dp27	7.0	Shooter	
Fortress of Narzod.....	VECT	dp06	cc	Shooter	
Frantic Freddy.....	CLCO	dp26	2.0	Shooter	Santulli
Freedom Force.....	NES	dp05	cc	Shooter	Schultz
Iron Soldier II.....	JAGC	dp32	8.5	Shooter	Villalpando
Laser Gates.....	2600	dp02	cc	Shooter	
Loaded.....	PSX	dp28	8.3	Shooter	
Meteor Defense.....	2600	dp19	4.0	Shooter	Oleniacz
Meteorites.....	5200	dp19	6.2	Shooter	Oleniacz
Outlander.....	GEN	dp10	n/a	Shooter	Santulli
Patriots.....	VECT	dp30	8.5	Shooter	
Polar Rescue.....	VECT	dp35	6.7	Shooter	Backiel
Power Lords.....	ODY2	dp12	5.7	Shooter	Oleniacz
Rebel Assault.....	SGCD	dp22	8.0	Shooter	
Rebel Assault.....	3DO	dp23	7.0	Shooter	
River Raid II.....	2600	dp32	6.0	Shooter	Oleniacz
S.T.U.N. Runner.....	LYNX	dp04	7.0	Shooter	Santulli
Sea Hunt.....	2600	dp26	1.5	Shooter	Santulli
Slipheed.....	MDCD	dp13	7.6	Shooter	Santulli
Slurpy.....	CLCO	dp26	3.0	Shooter	
Space Dungeon.....	5200	dp06	cc	Shooter	
Space Dungeon.....	5200	dp34	8.3	Shooter	lida
Star Fox.....	2600	dp26	2.0	Shooter	
StarFox.....	SNES	dp11	9.8	Shooter	Santulli
Strategy X.....	2600	dp10	4.3	Shooter	
Subterranea.....	GEN	dp19	7.4	Shooter	Santulli
Super Subroc.....	ADAM	dp35	7.5	Shooter	Villalpando
T2.....	GEN	dp09	n/a	Shooter	
Tomcat Alley.....	SGCD	dp19	8.3	Shooter	
Turbo Sub.....	LYNX	dp35	5.0	Shooter	lida
Twisted Metal.....	PSX	dp28	9.0	Shooter	
Vector Vaders.....	VECT	dp29	5.0	Shooter	
Web Wars.....	VECT	dp29	9.0	Shooter	
Wolfenstein 3-D.....	JAG	dp21	6.0	Shooter	
Worm Whomper.....	INTV	dp01	cc	Shooter	Santulli
Worm Whomper.....	INTV	dp19	9.0	Shooter	Santulli

SHOOTERS ANONYMOUS

By Clint Dyer

At Digital Press, we strive to meet everyone's gaming needs, including therapy from "over gaming". We perfectly understand the addictions caused by playing video games incessantly, as most of us have spent some time in gaming rehab to kick the habit. The shooter bug stings as hard as any, so we held our first ever "genre anonymous" meeting. Here were the minutes.

JOE S: Hello everyone and welcome to the December meeting of Shooters Anonymous. We have a new guest this week, and I'd like him to stand up and introduce himself.

CLINT: Hello, my name is Clint Dyer and I'm 31. I love shooters. I've loved shooters all my natural video game life. There have been several times in my life where I've played a shooter all day long, then played another one after that one. I'm addicted. Crowd: HI CLINT!

CLINT: Umm, hi...

CROWD: You're free to talk about your addiction with us. It's ok; you won't be looked down upon.

CLINT: Ok, it all started with my Fairchild video game system. Hitting my opponent with bullets in Spitfire attack, or shooting down boats in Shooting Gallery was so incredibly fun that I was instantly addicted.

CROWD: We see.

CLINT: Then, along came my 2600, and the game it was packed with was one of the best shooters of all time, Combat! What was I supposed to do? I didn't have a lot of money to spend on cartridges, so I had to play it! Of course, I played until the wee hours of the morning, staying under the covers with the TV and the volume turned low so my parents couldn't see the light or hear the sound.

CROWD: It's ok. We've all been there. Keep going.

CLINT: And, after that, they released more and more shooters. Megamania, River Raid, Moonsweeper, Chopper Command and Laser Blast, just to name a few. They knew what they were doing, and I was helpless to refuse their games.

CROWD: Mmmmmm.

CLINT: Then, when I finally got over my 2600 shooter addiction, I got an NES and a SMS. There were literally tons of shooters for them, and I must have played them all. Bad or good, I played them until my thumbs were numb. Games like Legendary Wings, Twin Bee, Astro Warriors and Power Strike kept me up late.

CROWD: {He's got it bad!}

CLINT: Quit thinking about me when I'm talking. Then, the Genesis came along, and it got really bad. The very first game I played for the Genesis was, you guessed it, a shooter. Thunder Force 2. I played that damned game until I finished it. Then, as if it weren't bad enough, the video game industry went through something of a "shooter boom", with literally 30 or 40 shooters that were so incredible that I thought I'd never get any sleep! Games like Truxton, Hell-

Fire, Guynog, Gaiars, Forgotten Worlds, Thunder Force 3, Lightning Force and Bio-Hazard Battle seemed to never leave my Genesis. And, then there was the Super Nintendo. One of the first games released for it was Gradius 3, and even though it sucked, I played it like my life depended on it. When I got tired of that, I found 2 SNES Japanese games, Area 88 and Darius Twin, and both spent quite a while in my SNES. I found out later that at the time I was playing all the great Genesis and SNES shooters, the people making the Turbographics system, which I didn't have, were releasing shooter after shooter after shooter. Well, as you can imagine, I saved my pennies and bought myself a Turbo system and played every shooter I could get my hands on.

CROWD: ...

CLINT: Well, eventually, the shooter fad died, and there was a period of about a year where there wasn't a single shooter released. I began going through withdrawals. I had finished most of the shooters I had in my collection, and I had to feed my addiction, so I turned to Japan. There, I found out that shooters were even more widely made. I got quite a few that weren't released in the States, and some that I'd missed that were released over here. Darwin 4081, Whip Rush (which wasn't released over here until after I played and finished it) and Heavy Unit were just a few of the games I found for the MegaDrive (Japanese Genesis). The Japanese games were a lot harder to come by, however, so eventually, I was going through withdrawals again.

CROWD: {I wonder if this guy is ever going to shutup}

CLINT: HEY! I said quit thinking about me!

CLINT: Now, where was I before I was so rudely interrupted? Oh yeah, next generation systems. The Saturn and Playstation release dates came and went, and sadly, very few shooters were released at first. The first Shooter for the Playstation was Philosoma, and although it was ok, it didn't satisfy my hunger for the platform. Then, I got a Japanese Saturn shooter and it changed the way I looked at shooters in general. I wish I knew the real name of this game, but sadly, it's a Japanese title and I can't speak that many vowels in the same word. Anyhow, it was an incredible game and to this day one of my favorite shooters ever. These systems have turned up quite a small number of shooters in general, but I've found most of them are great! Xevious 3D comes to the top of my mind as well as Thunderforce 5, G Darius (gotta love the fish!), Parodius and the Panzer Dragoon series. All are incredible, and going back and playing the games that I spent so many hours on is near impossible. Well, that's pretty much where I stand right now. I'm still as addicted to shooters as I was 15 years ago, and I don't see an end to my addiction. What can I do? I need help!

JOE S: We've got to end the session now, we'll meet here at the same time next week. Oh, and if anyone is interested, I'm having a party at my house this weekend. Bring your three favorite shooters!

CLINT: Crap, another waste of an hour.

what they brought to the party:

SCOTT STONE

- 1) Space Megaforce (SNES)

This is my fav, for the Super Nintendo and otherwise. If Compile has its hands on a shooter, it is gold!

- 2) Blazing Lasers (TG-16)

One of TurboGraphix-16's first and best shooters. Pretty difficult and many hidden codes to use add zest to the game.

- 3) Zanac (NES)

Many do not like this game, but I do. This is the shooter that got me into the vertical scrolling genre of shooter. Power-ups and challenging bosses make this a winner.

MIKE DOUGHERTY

- 1) Worm Whomper, Intellivision – Most people don't think of this one... But can you name a faster game on the Intelly?

- 2) Terra Cresta, NES – First time I saw this one, I had to have it. It is smooth and satisfying.

- 3) Raiden, Multiple Platforms – A classic, (even on the Jag) ... what more can be said about it.

DON ROGERS

- 1) Galaga - It's hard to beat a classic like this.

- 2) Raiden II - A fantastic update in the series.

- 3) 19XX - Good old Capcom shootem'up fun.

JOHN CHRISTOVASSILIS

- 1) Beamrider (for what it's worth) - quite possibly Activision's greatest ever home computer shoot-'em-up that managed to emulate, in certain respects, the greatness that Tempest had achieved in the arcades. Beamrider II (had it been made) could easily have been a challenge to the crown that Tempest still arguably holds as the best 3-D shoot-'em-up. River Raid in space.

- 2) After-Burner (Sega) - Sega's foray into the arcade scene with this Top-Gun rip-off was even better than Star Wars had been years before. Combining awesome music and sound effects with stunning graphics and motion control in the full cockpit version, it really gave you the impression that you were there – a part of the action – and it set the baseline for years to come.

- 3) Nova Blast (Imagic) - on the Colecovision it beats Atarisoft's Defender hands down. It offers more color, more action, smoother controls and finer handling than its rival and still manages to deliver a better product. Maybe not what Defender should have been, but definitely what that genre is all about.

SCOTT MORRISSEY

- 1) River Raid (Atari 2600)

- 2) Super Cobra (Atari 2600)

- 3) Side Arms (TGFX16)

IVAN SHEPPARD

- 1) Tapper Yes, Tapper is a shooter. Slow moving missiles (beverages) aimed at targets!

- 2) Gyruss

- 3) Millipede

MATTHEW DOVELL

- 1) Zator Mercenary on the Atari Lynx. It's damn impossible!

- 2) Defender 2000 on the Atari Jaguar. For the pointy fingers and camels

- 3) Star Raiders (any system) Just for the feeling of it

MICHAEL THOMASSON

- 1) Thunderforce 3

- 2) Thunderforce 4 aka Lightning Force in the USA

- 3) the third ones a toughy, as nothing really compares to the above two!!

DON EVANOFF

- 1) Robotron - no explanation needed

- 2) Zaxxon - a childhood favorite for its 3-D perspective and primitive but effective flight sim-like controls

- 3) Food Fight - food for bullets? Why not. And how about that cool instant replay?

STEVEN TRAVERS

- 1) Phoenix

- 2) Scramble

- 3) Vanguard. Okay, Galaga actually is in my top three, but I figured everyone would say that, so I wanted to get a mention for my other favorites.

JOHN GREVE

- 1) Without a doubt my favorite shooter is Defender. I own the arcade and as you know the game is a dream to play. It has all the necessary elements and is just a COMPLETE game. Too much fun!

- 2) Centipede, is that considered a shooter?

- 3) Zaxxon

I'll have to say though that I'm not what I once was when playing shooters. Seemed to have slowed a bit in the reflex dept., damn it!

KEITA IIDA

- 1) Tempest (Atari/Arcade) One of the most intense audiovisual experiences of any game you'll ever get! Tempest is about as original of a shooter as anything out there. The color vector graphics are awe-inspiring, and the rotary dial controller gives you perfect control over your crab-like ship (or whatever it's supposed to be.)

- 2) Galaga (Namco/Arcade) The ultimate incarnation of the Space Invaders theme, Galaga manages to keep things simple while throwing enough things at you to give you a headache. Dual ships are a must if you want perfect bonus scores. Honorable mention goes to Gaplus, Namco's ass-kickingly difficult - and unheralded - sequel.

- 3) Space Megaforce (Toho/SNES) The creme de la creme of 2D scrolling shooters, Space Megaforce has the best weapon system of any shooter, outstanding mode 7 effects, colorful graphics and nerve-wrecking gameplay. If you don't own this cartridge, don't even talk to me about how much of a shooter fan you are.

JOHN HARDIE

- 1) Pleiades (coin-op)- A great shooter. It's a shame this never made it out for any of the MAJOR home systems (although a 2600 proto is supposed to exist). An early multi-scenario game. Defend your city from the invaders, fight with some flying birds, take on the mother-ship, and then dock back at the port. Not an easy game, but not incredibly hard either. Just the right mix to keep you playing again and again and again... It just doesn't get any better than this!!!

- 2) Stratovox (coin-op)- One of the first voice games out there. Wasn't a smash hit when it was released but it really is a kick-ass game. Feel the sense of panic as an alien ship plucks one of your men from the planet and he yells out "Help Me". Don't let the aliens' cockiness grate on your nerves as they tell you you're a lucky shot or that "We'll be back".

Also appealing because it's a low-scoring game and hard as hell. I'd like to see someone break 50,000!

- 3) Moon Cresta (coin-op)- Another hard-as-hell, multi-scenario, low-scoring game! Moon Cresta spawned several rip-offs in the arcades. No BS about it, the game is damn hard. I consider myself pretty good and my high score is

only about 46,000. Still, there's something about this genre (especially these old-time classics) that keeps you playing. Maybe it's the urge to just get through the level without losing that first ship; or trying to boost your high score by 1000 points or so. At any rate, Moon Cresta is a must-play!

REcollecting

(Continued from page 7)

whining, whelping, and, at times, the hysterical fulminating of the anti-price guide faction, I have not found that the dreaded money factor has influenced flea markets or thrift stores at all. When I find 2600 carts at flea markets, they still run me from \$1 to \$3 a piece, just as they did six years ago. But that's not to suggest that there has been little change at flea markets. To the contrary, I find it almost impossible to find good stuff "in the wild," these days, especially relative to what it was like in 1991 and 1992.

Flea-marketing and thrifting used to be the part of collecting I enjoyed most. I got seriously into collecting in the spring of 1991, in fact, when I bought a pile of rare sealed 2600 games at a flea market from a guy named Harry, who had bought out a Wal-Mart after the crash. I'll never forget later finding a **Glib** at another flea market for \$5. I offered the guy \$4. He explained that **Glib** was "one of them hard to find games," and stuck fast at \$5. Sensing that I was about to storm away in a tantrum (I always expect flea market people to negotiate a little), my future wife gave me a swift elbow to the ribs. I paid the five bucks. Anyway, in addition to the **Glib**, most of my original Pandas, just about all of my Zimago games, a lot of Xonox, a ton of lesser rares, and a good percentage of my boxes came from flea markets, pawn shops, and thrift stores. At one point I had a collection of duplicates that would make for a nice primary collection today; I got most of the stuff at flea markets and used it to trade for more and more 2600 rares.

Ah for the good old days. Around here pawn shops no longer carry any classic games. And flea markets? Well, once in a great while I'll come up with something like a **Polaris**, and it's still pretty easy to find stuff like **Alien** and **Eggomania**. But flea markets have dried up almost completely, and thrift stores are even worse. Either people don't bother bringing classic games to flea markets, assuming that no one would want them, or the good stuff has found its way into the hands of other collectors. But never say never, and never think that flea markets are a complete waste of time. Three months ago I found a flea market dealer with a couple of big boxes of 2600 games, from which I extracted a **Halloween**, **Shuttle Orbiter**, **Miner 2049er Vol. 2**, a couple of **Pandas**, four different **Tigervision** games, and about twenty other decent carts—for a buck a piece. But note well: this was the first and only major flea market find, however, in three long years. I've thrown up a lot of flea market "air balls" in between.

These observations sound sort of doom-and-gloom. But they are not. I've discovered that it was possible to put together a big collection again, and it was done without primarily relying upon money. Details next time.

Game & Watch Primer, part 1

Nintendo

(Continued from page 8)

CN-07 HELMET Run your guy along the bottom of the screen while avoiding falling objects. Get hit by the falling objects, and you lose a life. This seems to be a very common theme to older LCD games. I'm not sure which came first the G&W version or the rest, but my guess would be that Nintendo was the original inventor.



LN-08 LION Ever want to be a lion tamer? This is the game for you. Keep the lions in check by showing a chair in their faces. The lions come from 6 different positions in the cage (3 on the left and 3 on the right) and you have to move our hero to meet the lion before it gets out of the cage. If one gets out, you lose a life and start over again.

This is part one of a four part series. The second, third and fourth parts of this article will appear in the three future issues of Digital Press. Don't miss 'em, subscribe now!

I, Robotron

(Continued from page 6)

ords broken, and **Titanic** will surely give up the top money making spot to the new **Star Wars** films, but, throughout all of that tempestuous turmoil, one mighty champion will not fall. I proclaim that champion, **Robotron:2084**. Oh, yeah, and in case you're interested, another reason I realized that the chance meeting of Ms. Walters was not as strange as I had initially surmised struck about another week after my **Robotron** epiphany. See, when I got my monthly credit card statement, there were a few extra charges on it that I really didn't remember ever making. London. Paris. Rome. LA. It turned out that when she stopped my hand from swiping my card through the card machine and tossed the clerk some cash for my groceries, she expertly swiped my card and pocketed it for later use. A word to the wise, if you don't have the cash, stay the hell outta the grocery store. Save up a couple a bucks, and when you're done buying your groceries, take the change and hit the arcade. Feed our old friend while you're there, and I'll see you 'round.

SUBSCRIBE, DAMN YOU!

Some video game publications pride themselves on being there "first". We're a little different. Since Digital Press readers consist primarily of multi-system owners of hundreds (sometimes thousands) of game cartridges, our world has become one where time means nothing. Atari 2600 and Sony Playstation games can be reviewed on the same page. We are fans of gaming, not of any particular system. Do you have a constant desire to play? Then join us - subscribe today! It's just ten bucks for six bi-monthly issues.

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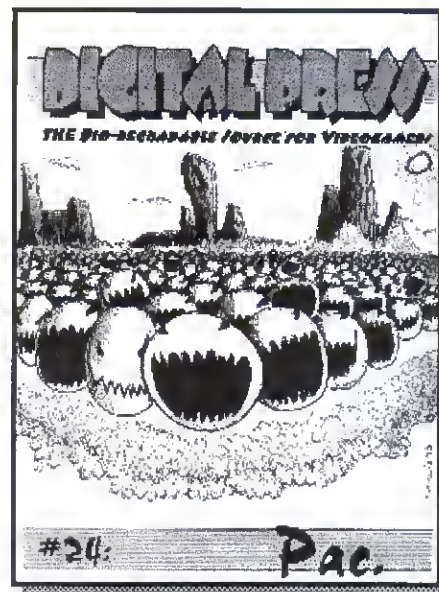
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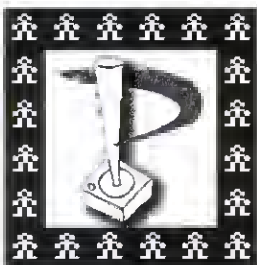
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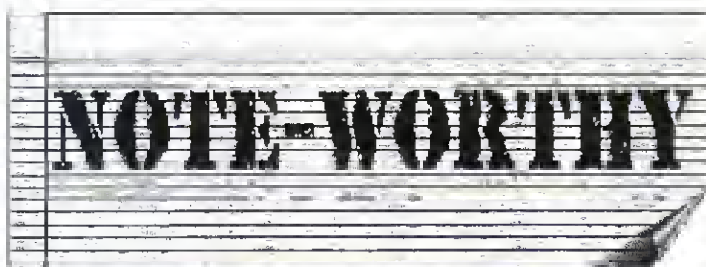
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atari 2600 combat two and real-sports basketball discovered!

After hooking up with former Atari Age editor Steve Morgenstern (see letter inside), we were able to procure ROM images of two previously unreleased Atari VCS titles, *Combat Two* (the sequel to the doorstep entry *Combat*) and *Real-Sports Basketball* (often discussed but never released by Atari). Both games are fully playable. *Combat Two* is a two-player only game featuring destructible walls and forest areas and long range ICBM attacks. *RS Basketball* allows one or two player action at several difficulty levels. Here are some pics, but for a full review of both games, check out Atari Gaming Headquarters on the net at www.atarihq.com, where Keita gives the lowdown on both titles.



Combat Two



Realsports Basketball



Digital Press is dedicated to the memory of my best friend
and DP co-creator, **Kevin Oleniacz**.

Kevin's spirit will be with us through every homing missile fired, knockout punch delivered, UFO destroyed, and finish line crossed.

Play recklessly. Think positively. Live **EVERY** moment to the fullest.